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Significant Factors and Events in the Evolution of Adult Literacy Policy and Practice from the 1970s to the Moser Committee

By Gordon O. Ade-Ojo

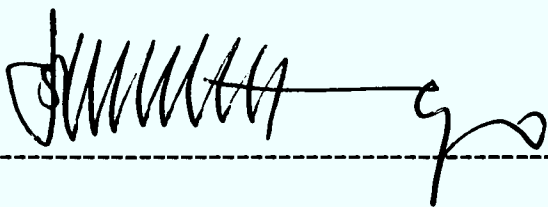
Being a thesis written in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor in Education Degree of the School of Education and Training, University of Greenwich.

March 2008

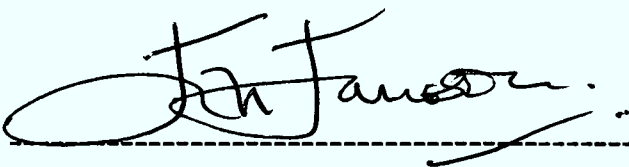


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I hereby declare that the content of this thesis is neither being considered for nor has been used for the award of any degree other than the Doctorate in Education of the University of Greenwich. I further declare that the content is my own work except in places where references have been made to studies by others.

Signed student 

Signed supervisor 

Signed supervisor 

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I am indebted to a number of people who contributed immensely to the writing of this thesis. In particular, I am grateful to my supervisors, Prof. Patrick Ainley and Dr Jill Jameson, both of whose patience with my sometimes strange reasoning and style of writing, and thoughtful guidance at all times contributed in no small measure to the conclusion of this study. I am also deeply grateful to my critical friend, Professor Ian McNay, whose comments not only induced improvements in this thesis but also served as a source of confidence. My gratitude also goes to my colleague, Sue Colquhoun whose support and encouragement kept me going when at my lowest and promoted a strong sense of self-believe which I did not know existed. Last but not the least, I am grateful to God who strengthened my arms and gave me the forbearance to endure through the loneliness of the long distance runner that writing a thesis can be.

Dedication

To the living, my family: Busola, John, Christine and Katherine without who all of this will be worth nothing and the memory of the dead, Jas Ade-Ojo - Dad, just another chance to dance with you ideologically.

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Abstract

This study was designed to trace the significant factors that informed the evolution of adult literacy policy from the 1970s to 2000. The study proceeded on the premise that factors have continued to change not only because of the changing social environment but also in line with developments within overarching educational policies.

The study, with a focus on process rather than product analysis, established a preference for the qualitative approach to research on the basis of its alignment to the social theory of literacy and employed a number of methods including interviews, an electronic questionnaire and documentary analysis, to collect data at three levels. The first consisted of as many members of the Moser Committee as would consent to being interviewed (8). A second group of ten individuals who were practitioners in the 1970s and 1980s, but who now have different roles ranging from involvement in research to management, were also interviewed. Lastly, data were collected through the use of an on-line questionnaire which was based on 65 responses from current practitioners in literacy to find their perception of the impact of policy on practice.

The study established that influential factors in the evolution of policy changed from the themes of entitlement and social responsibility which were dominant up to the mid-1970s, to the themes of the economy, the labour market and international competitiveness from the late 1980s onwards. These latter themes were found to be particularly significant in the deliberations of the Moser Committee which produced the most recent strategy on adult literacy. Also, the study confirmed that a focus on UK-wide perceived skills needs rather than the needs of individual learners was primary in the deliberations of the Moser Committee. Furthermore, it identified conflicting allegiances among members of the Moser Committee and that the SfL agenda the Committee produced was a product of compromises on many aspects of the Committee's deliberations. The study recorded that a majority of practitioners responding to the questionnaire held negative perceptions of the agenda and that, like some members of the Committee, they compromised their paradigmatic inclinations in implementing the dictates of the SfL agenda. The study concludes that literacy policy after the mid-1970s was largely informed by a perception that poor literacy was the cause and remedy of social dysfunctions rather than being just a symptom of them.

Finally, the study makes a number of recommendations to practitioners, policy makers, awarding bodies for literacy qualifications and teacher trainers. Central to these recommendations is the development of literacy curricula for specific purposes. The study argues that the development of such curricula will enable practitioners, funders and awarding bodies to be accommodated within the same framework of literacy delivery. This recommendation is also

central to the professional development of the researcher, as it is seen as relevant in his twin professional roles of literacy teacher and teacher educator.

Glossary of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full title
ABE	Adult Basic Education
ALBSU	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
ALLN	Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy
ALRA	Adult Literacy Resource Agency
ALU	Adult Literacy Unit
BAS	British Association of Settlements
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DA	Discourse Analysis
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
ERA	Education Reform Act
ESOL	English for Speakers of other Languages
ESRC	Economic and Social research Council
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FHE Act	Further and Higher Education Act
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
IFL	Institute for Learning
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
LEAs	Local Education Authorities
LFLFE	Literacy for Learning in Further Education
MSC	Manpower Service Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QTLS	Qualified Teacher in the Life-Long Sector
RAPAL	Research and Practice in Adult Literacy
SfL	Skills for Life
TECs	Training and Enterprise Councils
TOPs	Training Opportunities Programme
YOPs	Youth Opportunities Programme

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Literacy in contemporary British society.

Since the mid-1990s, literacy has progressively become central to government policies and has taken centre stage in debates across many educational and political disciplines. Following the now frequently contested Moser Report (1999), in which the assertion was made that 'people are staggered when one confronts them with the basic facts about literacy and numeracy', a vast amount of work with literacy at its heart has been done. One outcome of the Moser Committee's deliberations is the production of a national strategy for literacy and numeracy, which has since been subsumed under the term Skills for Life (henceforth SfL) and has become the driver for the integration of adult literacy into different spheres of educational and governmental policies.

Since its launch, the SfL agenda has also assumed a prominent position in national debates. Within its framework, literacy, together with numeracy and ESOL, has been one of the focal points of the government's policy initiative. Frank (2001:1) puts this in perspective when she argues that the launch of the SfL agenda in late 2001 made it 'clear that the UK government has shown a positive commitment to adult learning, and in particular literacy, numeracy and language'. Similar to the arguments of Ainley (1999), it could be suggested that a large part of government education, training and learning policy in contemporary times is to a significant extent informed by the government's perception of the role and success of literacy. Why there has been such a focus though, is a question that has been frequently overlooked by commentators, and is one to which this research should provide some

answers. It is, however, significant to highlight the fact that, although the Moser Committee's recommendations formed the basis of the SfL strategy, the strategy was not a total replication of the Committee's recommendations, as many aspects of it were mediated by what could be considered as the implementation group. For example, while the Moser recommendations do not specifically address issues like ESOL, learning difficulties and to some extent, the details of the requirements of the workforce, the strategy incorporated these issues. Reference to the recommendations of the Moser committee does not, therefore, necessarily refer to the strategy it generated subsequently.

The pre-eminence of literacy has occurred, however, not simply in the context of education. There have been arguments that aspects of social life and employment are linked to literacy, together with numeracy and language. A number of studies illustrate this position. Hurry, Brazier, Snapes and Wilson (2005:5) encapsulated the importance of literacy in the social context when they carried out research on the improvement of literacy and numeracy levels of disaffected young people in custody and in the community. They anchored the rationale for this study on the Moser Report (1999), which claimed that,

'whereas too many adults were not functionally literate and had problems with numeracy, which cramped their lives and undermined national productivity', younger people (16-20 year olds) were seen as a particular priority and this is endorsed by the criminal justice system since recent Home Office statistics show that young men aged between 10 and 20 commit 42% of all indictable offences'. (Hurry, Brazier, Snapes and Wilson 2005:5)

What is even more significant in terms of the role of literacy is the assertion from DFES (2003), which Hurry et al (2005:5) clearly subscribe to, that, 'Offenders have also been identified as a group requiring attention as a matter of urgency because their numeracy and literacy skills are under-developed compared to those of their peers'.

Similarly, Ananiadou, Jenkins, and Wolf (2003:6) demonstrated the importance of the role ascribed to literacy in the context of employment and the workforce declaring that, 'There is robust evidence that poor literacy and numeracy skills have adverse effects on the earnings and employment prospects of individuals'. They went further, and claimed alongside previous researchers like Bynner and Parsons (1997), Dearden et al. (2000), and Machin, McIntosh, Vignotes and Viltanen (2001) that, 'people with good literacy and numeracy tend to have higher wages and better chances of being in work than people who lack basic skills'. Through Ananiadou et al's report, literacy alongside numeracy is foregrounded as crucial in the labour/employment social context.

Reder (2000:16) analysed literacy from the perspective of its role in the development of human capital by integrating it into the context of a longitudinal study of adult learning. Although Reder's research was focused on the US, studies by Ade-Ojo (2002 and 2004), indicate that the phenomenon of 'conventionalism', which identifies a pattern of transference of policies and practice across Western countries, suggests that it is inevitable

that it will also have an impact on the debate about the role of literacy in the UK.

Within the context of the government's lifelong learning agenda, literacy again assumes a very prominent role. Hamilton (2000:2) identifies what she sees as a distinction between an 'increasingly formal and standardised version of ABE' (Adult Basic Education), which is 'designed to fit seamlessly with school achievement as part of a national literacy strategy' and strategy for lifelong learning which, 'promises a different vision of what literacy might be, a vision that is much closer, potentially, to the new understandings embodied in the New Literacy Studies'. In essence, Hamilton offers a model of literacy which she argues should be the basis of a sound launching pad for lifelong learning strategies, thus once again giving literacy pride of place in the delivery of an important strategy in the UK.

Even more relevant are the recommendations of recent policy initiatives like the Foster and Leitch reports of 2005 and 2006 respectively. In these policy initiatives, significant emphasis is put on the development of literacy as one of the essential functional skills. Indeed, each policy specifically identifies the role earmarked for literacy, in the development both of the individual and of the workforce within society.

In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that literacy has become an important topic of debate in contemporary British educational policy. This importance spreads across various spheres of government concerns including

employment, the manipulation and allocation of resources, as well as crime and rehabilitation. What this multi-dimensional perception of literacy suggests is that the policy driving its implementation was not generated simply from an educational position. Rather, it would seem that there are other considerations that were significant in the evolution of literacy policy. It is in this context that a study of the evolution of the range of policy positions responsible for its delivery is justified. This study is therefore designed to examine the evolution of policy guiding the delivery of such an important aspect of society's education, and the factors that have shaped policy in respect of an area that has become very important in the argument underpinning a series of policy positions, and cutting across several spheres of government policy.

Because literacy as presented above is accorded such a position of pre-eminence, it is important to understand why succeeding policy makers have attributed such importance to literacy. It is also important to understand the context in which these policies have been generated and the discourses that informed the policy making decisions which have ascribed such a significant role to literacy. Such an examination of the evolution of policy will ultimately provide a deeper understanding, not only of the various factors that informed the development of policy, but also how these factors have informed the manner of policy implementation and the tools provided for the delivery of literacy in practice.

Before looking at the specific context of this study however, it is important that the term adult literacy, which this research is concerned with, is clearly

defined. For the purpose of this study, adult literacy, its curriculum and the policies that generated it are seen as distinctly different from school literacy, as reflected in its distinctive features presented below.

1.2 Defining Adult Literacy in the context of this study

The attempt to define adult literacy here is informed by the recognition of the need to resolve possible ambiguities which might colour the interpretation of the data to be analysed in this study. Adult literacy here is seen as distinctly different from school literacy. As such, the policy initiatives and documents referred to in this research are specifically relevant only to the provision of adult literacy which is used in this study to refer to a provision with two key features.

First, the term refers to literacy provided to learners who are predominantly above the post-compulsory education age. This is in spite of recent government dictates, which compel FE colleges to admit learners who are 14 years old. The predominant focus of adult literacy is on learners who are of post-compulsory education age. That some of the beneficiaries may happen to be within a lower age range is more incidental than relevant.

The second feature of the provision referred to as adult literacy in this study is that it is not streamlined or mapped to the established key stages of educational accomplishment. In this respect, it carries with it the aura of informality that cannot be found in the mainstream compulsory educational provision of literacy. In this context, its delivery and assessment are not as

formalised as is the case in school literacy. Informality as used here refers in particular to the following. Firstly, it refers to the formal relationship between age and level of learners' placement which is dominant with school literacy. Secondly, it refers to the varied setting of provision which differs from the formalised setting of school literacy provision and the regimented alignment to assessment. It must be noted, however, that the development of the core curriculum and the recognition of specific awarding bodies and qualifications have moved the provision of adult literacy much closer to the formality of school literacy. The outstanding element of informality is, therefore, the setting of provision which ranges from community centres through prisons to further education colleges.

The other distinctive feature of adult literacy in contrast to school literacy as seen in this study is the issue of the learners' age. Prior to 2000, adult literacy learners were usually aged twenty one years and above. More recently, however, the inclusion of fourteen to nineteen year olds in further education has blurred the boundary between adults and school learners. Nevertheless, it is clear that adult literacy, as used in this study, does not in any way refer to learners engaged in primary education.

1.3. The focus of the present study

The present research sets out to contribute answers to the questions raised in the preceding section. It will, in particular, seek to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the distinct stages identifiable in the history of the development of adult literacy policy?
- (2) What are the significant factors that informed the development of literacy policy and practice at each stage?
- (3) To what extent is the adult literacy policy informed by social imperatives of contemporary society?

1.4. Structure of thesis.

The study is presented over eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and sets the context of the research. In addition, the chapter engages with issues such as description of the parameters of the study and definitions of relevant terminology. The second chapter engages in a review of literature in the field, while the third chapter examines issues related to the research and methodology tools, including the research paradigm, a literacy theoretical framework and issues around research methods, data collection and analysis. The succeeding four chapters present and analyse the data collected, with each of the first three chapters dedicated to a distinct period in the evolution of literacy policy. The last of these chapters focuses on the perception of practitioners who are currently engaged in the implementation of literacy policy at the front end. The final chapter presents the conclusions that can be drawn from the study, makes recommendations on the basis of the findings, and reflects on the execution of the research.

1.5. Research Hypotheses.

This research is underpinned by the following hypotheses:

(a) That the evolution of policy in the adult literacy field in the UK has been significantly informed by a range of factors.

(b) That there is a marked difference between the factors that were significant in the 1970s and those that have been significant from the 1980s to the present.

(c) That many of these factors since the 1980s are not directly related to education, and

(d) That the pattern of overall educational policy ideology is reflected in the evolution of adult literacy policy.

While these hypotheses are informed by existing works and this researcher's experience as a practitioner, it is expected that the data collected for this study will further illuminate the reasoning behind the series of policy positions which led to their generation.

Chapter 2: Review of literature

2.1. Introduction

Many reviews of literature in research predominantly engage in a chronicle of preceding works (Reid 2001). For a field such as educational policy development, and in particular, in a curriculum area like literacy that has been the focus of many government and educational policies and initiatives in the last several years, such a focus is sure to relate to a large number of existing works. Reid (2001) describes such an endeavour as 'largely discussion of the biography of those who had promoted it' (Reid 2001:1). This review takes a departure from mere biographical narration as it links existing work to the paradigmatic options in the field of literacy policy and practice. This offers the potential for a structured and focused dissection of existing studies rather than engaging in what Reid (2001:1), borrowing from Schwab (1969), describes as a 'flight of fancy'. Following from the above, contributions from scholars are appreciated as part of a larger structure of paradigmatic frameworks. Existing works are seen as reflections of the relationship between perceptions of literacy, the enabling policy generated by such a perception and the impact of both on practice. While this will engage in a necessary chronicling of existing studies, such a history will be integrated into paradigmatic and perceptual shifts in the field of literacy policy. The review of literature in this work is conceived as a narrative of a movement of transition through paradigms and perceptions, which are related, and which have jointly impacted upon policies and their outcomes in the form of curriculum. Lankshear (1999:1) noted that continuing changes in the perception of literacy induces an attendant shift in 'theoretical and normative tensions' linked to policies in the field of literacy. It could be argued therefore that this relationship inevitably influences the policy

type and end product on offer. It is this synergy between policy, theory and practice that the approach chosen for review of literature is designed to capture.

2.2. Some existing account of shifts in literacy policy and practice

Many scholars have identified shifts in literacy policy and practice development. For example, Graff (1991) recognises what is described as a shift from 'historical studies of literacy' to 'histories that would encompass literacy within their context and conceptualisation' that is, from 'the history of literacy' as was the focus of his first generation, to 'literacy in history' (Lankshear 1999:3). A second tier consists of studies that focused on 'quantitative records of literacy, mainly using census data, signatory sources, and the like --- in a closer and more detailed way than previously' (ibid). The third tier 'related trends in literacy to economic and social developments including mass schooling, and to social formation with the development of what Lankshear (1999:3) calls 'cultural politics and political economy of literacy in history'. The crucial issue for the present study about Graff's classification is the recognition of a shift across various paradigms, which is seen as either products of policy shifts, or as precursors of policy shifts.

Lankshear (1999:3-5) chronicles what he calls (p.3) 'Cross – disciplinary Treks to "The Great Divide"'. Recognising the convergence between disciplinary methodology and perceptions of literacy, he suggests that it was the interface 'between philosophy, classical studies, anthropology, history and

linguistics` (p3) that mostly accounted for the pattern of development and direction of literacy studies in the 1980s. The prevalent argument here is that perception of literacy should shift to a paradigm which sees it as an independent variable and not a product of the cognitive state. There was therefore a shift from a `literacy deficit` perception which saw a “great divide” between so-called civilized and uncivilized minds to a more `socially oriented domains` tradition that `came into direct conflict with the great divide/independent variable thesis`, resulting in `crystallising and making explicit a distinctively sociocultural paradigm of literacy studies` (ibid: 5).

Adopting a totally different modality for accounting for paradigmatic differentials, Demetrion (2005:4) narrates a tension, in the US, between:

`participatory literacy, laced with critical awareness in the tradition of Freire (1970), and governmental dogma, deriving from the linkage of adult basic education with the needs of the post-industrial economy and more recently welfare reforms`

In between these two extremes, he locates a third paradigm, which `proposes to mediate between the earlier two by focusing on the literacy practices of adult literacy students`. This is Demetrion's way of describing what is more popularly referred to as the New Literacy Studies. Demetrion's classification is understandable as his focus is largely on the last fifteen years. He therefore sees what he classifies as (p.8) `incompatibility where rival paradigms simply conflict`. In spite of the limitation imposed by the relatively shorter scope of coverage in Demetrion's study in the US, there is much to say for the parameters he has chosen in his classification of paradigms. Demetrion's classification suggests that movements between paradigms should not be seen as time-bound. They should be seen in the context of the relationship in

contemporary times between policy and practice. As he illustrates with the Equipped for the Future (EFF) reading project in the US, there is a predictable shift between perceptions of literacy depending on whether the activity has to do with policy, research or practice (p.206). These movements are therefore in never-ending transition, informed and influenced by dominant political, social, and indeed, educational variables. On the basis of the foregoing therefore, the study will classify paradigmatic shifts and transitions along the pattern set in Demetrian (2005).

2.3. Perceptions of literacy

I have chosen to use the term traditionalist/cognitive perception of literacy to represent the school of thought that was prevalent and that informed many of the literacy policies devised and implemented between the 1960s and early 70s, but which has endured with many government-led literacy policies. This is representative of what Street (1984, 1995) labels the 'autonomous' model of literacy. One clear and distinctive feature of this perception is the viewpoint that literacy is purely psychological, both in its achievement and impact. Because of this, therefore, policies generated through this perception will advocate finding a remedy for psychological deficiency, in order to subsequently address social issues. Gee et al (1996:1) describe this position as holding that '... literacy is seen as a psychological ability--- something true about our heads'. The use of the term cognitive is therefore rooted in this perception of literacy's relationship to the psychological domain.

The second strand is what I have chosen to use the term “New Literacies” to represent. This term is frequently used in the literature to describe a movement from the traditional perception of literacy which Street (1984:1) describes as the:

‘rejection ---- of the dominant views of literacy as a neutral and technical skill, and the conceptualisation of literacy instead as an ideological practice, implicated in power relations and embedded in specific and cultural meanings and practices’.

Although several other terms like ‘situated Literacies’ (Barton and Hamilton 2000) or ‘sociocultural literacy’ (Gee et al:1996) have been used, the referents of these terms share enough in common to warrant the use of the same term to broadly represent them. Specifically, they advocate the recognition of non-cognitive factors, like the cultural, the political, the social, and most importantly, variations in settings and reject the technicist and cognitivist positions inherent in the position of the traditional perception of literacy.

The term critical/politicised perception is used to represent the body of studies rooted in the Freirean conception (1970) of literacy as a tool for critical awareness. This is informed by the perception that most of the studies in this genre have sought to link their arguments to political issues. As a result, arguments contained in such work appear to have as their central focus the issue of political systems. Although studies from the strand that I have called ‘New Literacies’ also recognise the political, they have not been so totally politicised. While, for the New Literacies, the political appears to be incidental, it is perhaps the central concern of the politicised.

In a strange way, there appears to be a form of regional affiliation in the pattern of studies aligned to the principles of New Literacies and critical literacy. Many of the studies presented through the lenses of New Literacies and critical literacy appear to have originated from Australia and the UK while those aligned to the traditional perception appear to be predominantly US based. Whether this is significant is difficult to say. Nevertheless, this might well be a confirmation of the significance of the role of setting in the perception of literacy as social practice. As noted by Lankshear (1999:3), much of literacy work in this century:

'has been dominated by paradigms from psychology, and has aimed to understand reading, writing, spelling, and comprehension as cognitive and behavioural processes in order to improve teaching and learning approaches to mastering written texts' and:

'Those working in the field did so mainly under the rubric of 'reading', 'writing' and related terms, as reflected in the names of long established journals and professional associations: e.g., The International Reading Association, which publishes The Reading Teacher, and the US-based National Reading Conference, which publishes The Journal of Reading Behavior'.

The influence of these establishment infrastructures might, therefore, be seen as significant in conditioning the focus of studies originating from the US in contrast to those originating from Europe, Australia and Canada which were significantly driven by a sociological ethos particularly informed by an engagement with issues of migrant populations and socially and educationally disadvantaged people (Lankshear 1999).

2.3.1. The Traditional/Cognitive Strand

Dating back to the work of Havelock (1963), there have been intermittent contributions to the development of a theoretical framework from the viewpoint of cognitive or traditional appreciations of literacy. The underpinning arguments of the studies are anchored on the following themes. Unlike orality, writing, which is the ultimate manifestation of literacy, frees humans from dependence on memory and from 'emotional trappings' necessary for purposes of recall (Havelock 1963:209). Language-related logical procedures like syllogistic reasoning and resolving contradictions appear to be functions of writing (Goody and Watt 1963). Cultural sophistication in respect of such functions is therefore a direct product of literacy. As argued by Goody (1977), changes in means and methods of communication, particularly, writing distinguishes advanced from primitive cultures`.

Literacy is directly responsible for man's (people's) ability to abstract and engage in logical reasoning (Hildyard and Olson 1978). Hildyard and Olson (1978) highlighted the difference between the 'savage' and the 'intellectual' mind and argued that the huge outlay of resources on compulsory schooling underlines the importance of literacy in changing the 'savage' mind to an 'intellectual' mind. They asked, 'If it is indeed the case that intellectual resources of savage and modern minds are essentially equivalent, what legitimises the extraordinary efforts and resources that go into compulsory schooling?'(ibid: 4). Finally, the spatial and thought processing features of writing are essential for thought restructuring (Ong: 1982). As such, writing is a mandatory tool of enlightenment and is:

'absolutely necessary for the development not only of science, but also history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art, and indeed for the explanation of language itself' (p14).

Before taking a critical look at the arguments imbued in the cognitivist perception of literacy, it is important to note the following. First, it would seem that there has been a dearth of studies that claim to extend the theoretical base of this traditional perception of literacy. Instead, there is an abundance of studies that proclaim their adherence to different perceptions of literacy, but in practice, fully align with the perceptions of traditional literacy. One exception is Cobb (1997), who in carrying out a review of Hill and Parry's (1994) book, *From Testing to assessment: English as an International Language* offers some explanation on behalf of Olson (1977) and seeks to develop Olson's autonomous model by suggesting that Olson's (1977) argument was not to the effect that 'literacy ever managed to produce totally – free-standing texts, demanding no contribution from the reader'; rather, Olson's message, and indeed the message of the autonomous model, is that 'the evolution of text in the West has been towards self-containment, not that it ever could or should arrive there' (Cobb 1997:1). This seems to suggest that the evolution of text in the Western world has a spirit of its own, and is not subject to control or direction by any human interference.

Nevertheless, 'Many development agencies and those responsible for schooling and illiteracy programmes subscribe to this perception of literacy' (Street 1995:152). As a result, while there is a dearth of theoretical contributions in support of the cognitivist perception of literacy, there is

abundance of studies carried out by contracted agents, which tends to subscribe to the traditional views of literacy. It is therefore crucial that we explore some of the studies which confirm their alignment to the cognitivist perception of literacy in practice while proclaiming their adherence to other perceptions. As such, the review that follows is construed as an examination of studies that are aligned to the traditional perception of literacy, but embedded in practice.

2.3.2. Traditional/Cognitive perception in practice

Herrington (2004:1) sets the stage for this paradoxical interaction between theory and practice when she used the phrase 'having it both ways'.

Herrington argues (ibid) that:

'Adult literacy practitioners across the world have long worked out ways of occupying the both---and space----. They have interpreted curricula creatively, they have found ways of mapping learner-centred, creative work onto prescribed curriculum frameworks, and they have found ways of always including the deeper curriculum with pieces of functional literacy work'.

Herrington's argument points out the seemingly enforced movement between overarching guiding principles and the reality of practice. For some practitioners, circumstances have compelled practice that is aligned to perceptions they personally reject. In real terms, this criss-crossing is often manifested in movements between beliefs in the principles of New Literacies to practices rooted in the traditional / autonomous perceptions of literacy. This movement partly constitutes evidence for what I have referred to earlier as a movement in transition.

Herrington sheds further light on this tendency when she notes that (p.1) 'in the battle for resources, they (practitioners) have even employed the models and myths of the policy makers -----'. What this suggests is that many of these practitioners are unwilling tools and victims of circumstances in the propagation of the traditional mode of literacy. More importantly, their practice is simply a response to the policy that informs it. This, however, is not to suggest that many practitioners were lacking in clear purpose. Rather, what many practitioners were compelled to do was to find an accommodation for their purposes within the framework of the dominant discourse of funders as much as they possibly can. Nevertheless, it is clear that policy makers had the wherewithal to impose their perception of literacy on practitioners. Focusing on the inclination of policy makers and their agents to rely on traditional perceptions of literacy, Herrington (p.3) submits that 'simply working around the most recently prescribed frameworks cannot satisfy us' and that,

'we have to return to the question of why policy-makers want to work with simple narratives about literacy and why ideological (in contrast to autonomous/traditional) models seem to them to be too complicated to underpin policy'.

Similar patterns involving movement between perceptions of different models by individuals are also noted in the literature (Street 1995, Lankshear 1993a and Ackan 1997). These works illustrate how elements of traditional perception of literacy manifest themselves in proclaimed New Literacies practice alongside incidences of acclaimed exponents of New Literacies subscribing to elements of the traditional/autonomous model of literacy.

Ananiadou et al (2003) reported a series of studies that potentially provide evidence of a mix between a theoretical allegiance to autonomous perception and an allegiance to New Literacies in practice. The report reviewed what they call 'Benefits to employers of raising basic skills'. The whole concept of seeing benefits accruing to employers emanates from the human capital argument (Allen and Ainley 2007) and holds a perception of literacy as a kind of cognitive skill, which once it is achieved, becomes an asset to employers and what Sandlin (2000:1) refers to as 'The New Literacy Myth'.

However, from the viewpoint that the studies seek to locate the use of literacy in specific contexts, it could be argued that they subscribe to the principles of New Literacies. Perhaps it is in appreciation of the dilemma of classifying studies of ambivalent features like the ones reviewed above that Herrington (2004:1) says of some practitioners, 'They have interpreted prescribed curricula creatively, they have found ways of mapping learner-centred, creative work onto prescribed curriculum frameworks...'.

Ananiadou et al's report (2003) classifies studies according to their focus and can be summarised as follows: studies that sought to establish the impact of training on productivity and profit (Dearden et al 2000); studies (p.24) that sought to investigate the effects of training in basic skills on the 'scrappage rate' (Holzer, Block, Cheatham and Knott 1993); and studies that sought to find the relationship between basic skills training and productivity (Bartel 1994). Other studies informed by a similar ethos include Black and Lynch (1996 and 1997) on the impact of training on productivity in manufacturing and non-manufacturing firms in the US; Carriou and Jeger (1997) on the relative

impact of increase in training expenditure on value added in French firms; Delame and Kramarz (1997) on the impact of training on both profitability and value added; Ballot and Fakhfakh (1996) on the impact of training investments on the performance of firms in France and Sweden, and Laplangne and Bensted (1999) on the impact of training and innovation on workplaces in Australia. Other studies, quantifying the impact of training on productivity levels of various firms in different countries include Otterson, Lindh and Mellander (1996), who sought to measure the impact of training on cost reduction among firms in Sweden; Alba – Ramirez (1994) who examined the effect of training on productivity among firms in Spain; and Von Bardeleben, Beitch, Krekel (1995) who investigated the effects of training among a panel of firms in Germany.

Also typical of the cognitive /traditional trend is the report of a study carried out for the National Foundation for Educational Research by Brooks and Wolf (2001). Adopting the framework of the traditional perception of literacy, the report presented its findings under predictable headings such as, 'employers' views on basic skills needs in the workplace', 'impact of poor basic skills', 'estimated economic returns to individuals of basic skills qualifications' and 'factors associated with poor basic skills' (pp 24,27,28, 29), thereby employing what is often referred to as the 'deficit' and 'wealth' models of appreciating literacy initiatives.

As sources of the data presented in their report, Brooks et al. (2001) cite several reports and studies, many of which were sponsored by agencies of

government. This perhaps explains why descriptions in many of these studies tended to adopt the traditional view of literacy even though some of the authors are renowned for having a totally different perception. Among these studies is ALBSU's (1993) report on employers' perception of basic skills needs of manual workers, a study of the needs of 73 companies in the UK by Frank and Hamilton (1993), DFEE (1997) report on skills needs in Britain, and Ekinsmyth and Bynner (1994) on what they call 'malaise'.

A different trend was however noticed by Ananiadou et al. (2003:29), who reported a number of studies that simply included training as one of the variables within a cocktail of variables. As a result, these studies are unable to make definitive statements about the impact of training as a single variable. Typifying this are Ichniowski, Shaw and Prennushi (1997) who investigated effects of bundles of innovative work practices on productivity with training as one component of the bundle; De Kok (2000) who reported the effect of measures linking training and broader human resources practices on productivity, and Guest, Michie, Sheehan and Conway (2000a and 2000b) and Michie and Sheehan-Quinn (2001) who reported findings of studies which sought to measure the impact of a combination of training and other human resources management measures on the productivity of panels of firms across the UK. As indicated by the nature of these studies, one obvious problem is the fact that they do not provide the opportunity to distinctly identify the specific impact of basic skills training in the performances of these firms. It would therefore be foolhardy to postulate any general theories on the basis of what is reported in these studies.

Despite this, other studies adopt the typical conservative perception of literacy by attempting to measure the impact of training on individuals and positing that training is capable of taking these individuals on the trek across the 'great divide'. The method for measuring literacy in these studies is quantified through examination and qualification and thus appears to belong in its entirety to the realm of traditional literacy. Illustrating this trend, Bynner and Parsons (1997) discussed the impact of basic skills on aspects of employment, health and family lifestyles of individuals. Similarly, Dearden, Reed and Van Reenen (2000) examined the impact of literacy and numeracy in terms of real returns, their impact on wages and levels of earning.

Other studies reported in Brooks et al. ((2001) seek to relate literacy acquisition with economic wellbeing. The 1999 Moser Report in the United Kingdom is one illustration highlighting some of the economic implications of low literacy (and numeracy) skills. Similarly, in the United States, other studies have sought to confirm a natural one-to-one relationship between improvements in the literacy skills of workers and economic development (e.g. Chisman and Campbell 1990, Darkenwald and Valentine 1984, Newman and Beverstock 1990). It is this principle that drives aspects of the recent 'welfare-to-work' initiatives in the United States (Martin and Fisher 1999).

In a recent study, Parsons and Bynner (2008) further explored the theme of the significant role of basic skills in the lives of adults. Examining the lives of 34-year-olds with Entry level literacy and numeracy, with particular emphasis

on adults whose skills are at Entry 2 or below, they found that the role of basic skills is not isolated and all-pervading in the configuration of excluded people. Rather, they suggested that 'The trajectory of disadvantage begins early, characterised by poor family circumstances, limited educational achievement and low aspirations' (p.4). This in a way defeats the argument of those who will insist on seeing basic skills as the sole factor responsible for lack of progress and exclusion. As Parsons and Bynner argue (ibid), the trend is by no means inevitable, as 'Many individuals who start their lives on an 'exclusion path' are of course able, through effective support at home, in the community, at school or college and in the workplace, to turn their lives round'.

The series of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (henceforth OECD) reports over the last decade (e.g. OECD 1992, 1995, 1997, OECD/Statistics Canada 2000) are also relevant here. These reports draw on international comparisons of literacy rates using standardised measures, and recommending a focus on improving literacy skills as the 'key' to unlocking the benefits of globalisation (e.g. OECD 1995: 23). What is important about the contributions of organisations such as the OECD is the fact that they are so influential that reports emanating from them, or prepared under their remit, represent a powerful and dominant voice on the relationship between literacy skills and aspects of employment. As Black (2001) puts it, 'they are part of a broader human capital discourse which sees education as an investment which will lead to greater economic productivity'.

Studies that seek to relate monetary returns to advancement in the acquisition of literacy skills tend to conveniently overlook a number of issues. Firstly, there are several other skills that could possibly have contributed to whatever progress is made, but which are ignored, or perhaps unnoticed, as they were not the concern of these studies. The findings of Dearden et al. (2000:32) appear to support this viewpoint, noting that:

‘the expectation of higher wage earning by those who have improved their literacy and numeracy skills is subject to the influence of other factors like family background, parents’ educational level’,

Again, this debars us from making any serious general claims about the role of literacy, as the authors themselves emphasised that the findings of reports of the impact of literacy on individuals ‘cannot be more than very imprecise estimates of the scale of impact’ (p.32).

Secondly, the perceptions underlying these studies raise a number of concerns. There is no evidence that they consider the possibility of a simultaneity of factors, which can all combine to have an impact either on productivity levels or on individuals. The assumption that literacy is a cognitive tool implies that other factors are less significant. Furthermore, these studies also ignore historical factors in the progress of individuals. The possibility that some people did not progress at work because their historical, psychological and social realities did not allow them to consider themselves as possible candidates for such progression appeared not to have been considered at all.

Finally, another limitation of this approach to mapping the effect of literacy is the preference for ignoring simple explanations. Most of the studies concluded that basic skills training played some role in the improvement of productivity levels of various panels of firms and in the earnings of employees. However, a possibility was overlooked that earning levels will improve anyway, as the workforce becomes more experienced, and even more so in the case of productivity, as technology improves.

Traditional perceptions of literacy tend to view literacy from the viewpoint of a quantifiable checklist, as something which one either can or can't do. Scholars like Street (1984, 1995), Barton (1994), Gee (1996), Lankshear (1999) and Barton and Hamilton (2000) have all challenged the theoretical foundation of this perception. Others, like Black (2001) and Kelly, Soundrayanagam and Grief (2004), have reported cases that challenge the basis of these assumptions in practice. From the specific perspective of this study however, I will take issue with a number of theoretical assumptions underpinning this traditional perception of literacy.

The traditional perception of literacy was anchored on the concepts of abstraction and rigidity developed from the perceived difference between orality and literacy (Havelock 1963, Hildyard and Olson 1978) and fails to account for a number of issues. How, for instance, do we account for individuals who reside in communities/ societies classified as capable of abstraction, but who are themselves not capable of abstractions? Conversely, how do we account for the reverse as in the case of Iran reported in Street

(1984 and 1995)? The argument of traditionalists fails to distinguish between what individuals are capable of as against what the community or society has on offer. Ignoring these factors makes it easy for the traditional perception of literacy to jettison the notion of context.

In fending off arguments for the overlap between written and oral language, Ong (1982) proclaimed that writing is not a representation of objects, but of sound. That is, it is essentially phonetic, but not ideographic. In recent times however, scholars like Lankshear and Knobel (2000), Lankshear and Bigum (2000) and Goodson, Knobel, Lankshear and Mangan (2000) have firmly placed what they call 'New Technoliteracies' within the realms of New Literacy studies. Lankshear and Knobel (2000: 2-10) for instance, identify 'Zines', 'scenario setting', and 'Multimedia' as components of the New Technoliteracies. In particular, they recognise that such media as charts and images are now an indispensable part of literacy practices. If we accept the argument that images are object bound in many instances, and follow wholesale the arguments of traditionalists, it would mean that images cannot be considered as tools of literacy as they will be context specific. This, in the context of contemporary developments, and indeed, just from what we know about imagery and imagination, is totally untenable.

The argument above about the role of images then leads on to a crucial question: How do we extract orality in its totality from writing? Regardless of the argument that writing is sound bound and not object bound, there is ample evidence in language to suggest that some written items are time and context

bound. As a result, they cannot be meaningfully produced in a different context or setting. Would we then argue that some part of written language should not be seen as part of literacy? This is another evidence of the inconsistency embodied in the traditional perception of literacy.

The argument that unlike orality, written language is capable of abstraction is another area of inconsistency, as it is possible for orality to demonstrate the quality of projection in some cases. One instance of this is the practice of mental sums, which are the very embodiment of abstraction, yet have no direct relationship with written language. Street (1984/1993) appears to recognise this factor when he discusses the Makhtab commercial literacy in Iran. As the traditional view of literacy insists on the quality of abstraction, could we then admit that some parts of orality are admissible into the realms of abstraction, and in effect, literacy?

Finally, when Hildyard and Olson (1978) talk about savagery as a symbol of 'illiteracy', they conveniently overlook the fact that even the interpretation of savagery is time-bound, and therefore context-bound. To argue on the one hand for an appreciation of literacy that has no links to settings and context, and, on the other hand, to seek to interpret its impact using a notion that is itself context and time-bound appears contradictory.

2.3.3. The New Literacies

The review of studies classified as New Literacies is presented under three sub-headings of: studies that seek to establish theoretical frameworks for the New Literacy approach; studies that report positive outcomes of this

perception of literacy in practice; and studies which negate assumptions underlying traditional literacy viewpoints.

2.3.3.1. Theoretical contributions.

Four books made outstanding contributions to the establishment of a theoretical framework for the New Literacies from which many other studies draw. Lankshear (1999:6) declared Street's *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (1984) as the 'first explicit programmatic account of literacy studies from the sociocultural point of view'. Street (1984) set the scene for a sociocultural appreciation of literacy when he proposed the recognition of two models of literacy: the autonomous and the ideological. Street's account of the ideological model set the stage for his and others' critique of the autonomous model, as well as the extension of the ideological concept of literacy into theoretical and practical spheres. He characterised the autonomous model as one that 'assumes a single direction in which literacy development can be traced, and associates it with "progress", civilisation, individual liberty and social mobility' (P.2). In contrast, Street identifies the ideological model of literacy as one which 'recognises the ideological and therefore culturally embedded nature of such practices' and:

'stresses the significance of the socialisation process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for participants and is therefore concerned with the general social institutions through which this process takes place and not just the explicit educational ones' (p2).

These two positions set the scene for what now permeates the field as distinctly contrasting paradigms in literacy studies.

In other works, Street seeks to ground his arguments in actual literacy practices in particular contexts. For example, he describes (1984:132-157) what he calls the 'Maktab' and 'commercial' literacies' as illustrations of social literacy in the Iranian setting and concludes that in addition to the fact that literacy under the Maktab dispensation 'was still significant for religious dominance', it also 'contributed in important ways to their social and commercial dominance' (p.132). This conclusion forms a basis for recognising a sociocultural role of literacy in practice.

Gee's *Social Linguistics and Literacies* (1996) typifies the work of the proponents of New Literacies, who anchor their argument on a linguistic base. Considering the fact that literacy is in itself an exposition of language use, it is important to explore the linguistic arguments sustaining this appreciation of literacy. Gee (1996:1) argues that literacy should be seen as 'a matter of social process – something to do with the social, institutional and cultural relationships'. This argument derived from a three pronged assessment of a reading event locates it in the realm of linguistics. For Gee, a reading event can only be carried out successfully through a synergistic relationship of the nature, interpretation, comprehension and finally, response to the text. All of these factors are crucially informed by the particular social setting of the text and of the reader. Every text, Gee (1996) argues, is 'always of a certain type, which is read in a certain way'. As such, each text 'requires somewhat different background knowledge and somewhat different skills', and so, 'different people will read sentences in different ways' and would probably conclude that 'others had read them in the wrong way' (p2). This relationship

between text and its social setting serves as the launching pad for Gee's appreciation of literacy as something that is social, and ultimately, culturally bound.

Barton's *The Ecology of the Written Language* (1994) also provided the framework for appreciating New Literacies from a dissenting position in terms of attitudes. Barton (1994:5) acknowledged that 'literacy has become a code word for more complex views of what is involved in reading and writing'. Within this complexity, issues such as attitude are embedded. In other words, the appreciation of literacy has transcended the mono-dimensional approach of cognitivism to embrace a whole gamut of social practices. Particularly relevant to the proposition of literacy as social practice is Barton's examination (pp11-32) of metaphors which are crucial to the debate about what constitutes literacy and illiteracy. Barton argues that, from a traditionalist perception of literacy, there is a prevalent use of metaphors with negative connotations in the description of literacy. These metaphors, he suggests, frequently present literacy problems as some form of disease. This, he suggests, contributes in no small way to what he calls the 'Ecological metaphor', a term deriving from the biological reference to the interrelationship of an organism with its environment. Barton submits that 'Literacy is in this case, a part of the environment and at the same time influences and is influenced by the environment' (p.29). In effect, literacy from Barton's viewpoint cannot and should not be seen on its own as an independent activity.

Also worthy of attention is the work of Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000) which presented the position of New Literacies through the framework of their social theory of literacy. The social theory of literacy recognises the culturally embedded nature of specific social practices of reading and writing (Barton et al 2000), and the 'significance of the socialisation process in the construction of the meaning of literacy' (Street 1993:2). It is also 'concerned about the general social institutions through which the process takes place' (ibid). This model is encapsulated in the perception that 'literacy is a social practice' (Barton and Hamilton 2000:7). Crucial to this perception is the argument that the basic unit of a social theory of literacy must be literacy practices. Illustrating this cardinal point are six propositions:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events, which are mediated by written text
- There are different literacies, which are associated with different domains of life
- Social institutions and power relationships pattern literacy practices, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices
- Literacy is historically situated
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (Barton and Hamilton 2000:8).

These propositions offer frameworks through which the implementation of New Literacies could be appreciated and analysed.

Several other studies have contributed to the establishment of a framework for the socio-cultural appreciation of literacy. These works have, however, located their arguments in the context of particular practices, or in some cases, concepts. For example, Hamilton (2000) relates the practice of literacy to photography, seeking to make a case for the position that, Social Literacies 'emphasize the social relationships and institutions within which literacy is embedded' (p.16). This contrasts with the traditional approach to literacy which 'construes it as a set of cognitive skills possessed (or lacked) by individuals' (ibid). Hamilton proposes four key elements of what she sees as literacy events. These are the participant, settings, artefacts and activities. All of these factors combine to confirm the notion of the social dimension of literacy. An extension of Hamilton's proposal would suggest that the listed features can manifest in settings other than the written text. As such, literacy as a social event, must, and does transcend the limited scope of writing, to which the traditional viewpoint is restricted.

In similar applications of sociocultural literacy, Tustin (2000:35) applied the concept to time and concluded that:

'constructions of how literacy practices have been in the past, and how they will be in the future, will change as the present emerges, and are themselves (only) relative to the point of view of the observer'

thus emphasising the time-induced context of literacy. Pardoe (2000) explores what he calls symmetry concluding that in the context of literacy, it as an issue of whether we draw on, say, psychological or social, single or multiple,

universal or contingent repertoires of explanation. Pardoe's observation above provides the ground for extending the frontiers of the inherent claims of the social theory of literacy, as it incorporated several extra-content factors in the analysis of literacy practices. This echoes the claims of the social theory of literacy that literacy is informed by and manifested in the cognitive, but also by several other socially related factors. The empirical nature of the illustrations of these claims lends credence to their inherent arguments.

Although the foregoing appears to have focused essentially on literacy practice in contemporary time, there is evidence that pockets of practice in the 1970s embraced the principles of New Literacies, at least in practice. At the beginning of the literacy campaign in the 1970s, publications like *Wages to Windscale* (1978) appear to have set the scene for this pattern. What publications like this appeared to have done was to map a learner-driven curriculum to a New Literacies approach. Effectively, therefore, while recognising the cognitive skills that contemporary literacy development required, they have tried to situate them within a wider socio-cultural framework.

However, it must be noted here that New Literacies has so far failed to suggest how a literacy curriculum for adults is to be structured beyond local settings. In this context, it is useful to look at some of the works coming out of the Lancashire school, which argue the case of the New Literacy Model. Many of these studies provide a description of the type of literacies available in different learning settings. What they, however, fail to do is to provide a

theoretical framework for how these literacies can be recognised as foci of literacy studies on their own. Typifying this are studies by Satchwell and Ivanic (2007) and Manion and Ivanic (2007) developed on the basis of their research on the Literacies for Learning in Further Education (LlLFE) project. In the former, the authors explored a range of written texts which are seen as mediating tools in learning contexts. In the latter, the authors describe existing literacy practices of FE students and analysed the extent to which the use and recognition of these practices has impacted on literacy learning. Essentially, these studies are descriptions of sociocultural uses of literacy. As noted by Satchwell and Ivanic 2007:305, 'it is crucial not to conflate "literacy" with "learning"' What studies like the LlLFE have provided, therefore, are descriptions of existing Literacies but not a precise definition of the content of these literacy types, the processes for their acquisition and the context in which such knowledge and skills are applied. This contrasts, for instance, with the PISA framework (2006) which, within the domains of scientific, mathematic and reading Literacies, 'defines content that students need to acquire, the processes that need to be performed, and the contexts in which knowledge and skills are applied (OECD 2006). The effect is that literacy as proposed by this school of thought is often dismissed as not robust enough to merit inclusion in the curriculum and not worthy of attention from curriculum policy makers. The implication is that this model of literacy is often left open to claims of impracticality.

2.3.3.2. New Literacies in Practice

Studies presenting New Literacies in practice can be seen from two perspectives. On the one hand, there are studies designed to negate the claims of traditional literacy through the demonstration of the New Literacy approach. On the other hand, there are studies that demonstrate the potential of using a New Literacy approach. The review in this section will therefore follow these broad patterns, starting with the former.

Black (2001:1) challenges 'dominant discourses on literacy and (un) employment' by contesting (p.1) 'common sense understandings of the relationship between literacy and numeracy skills and (un) employment'. Contesting the human capital argument linking literacy to economic value, Black proposed an alternative sociocultural approach. He countered the following alarmist claims: 'literacy is the difference between competing in the international markets with a well trained workforce – and stagnation' 'represented as a scourge... for the economic security and productivity of individuals' (International Literacy year, 1991, and DEET 1991b:20-23); 'Literacy is seen to restrict the ability of workers to adapt to new technology and new workplace practices... and leads to costly mistakes...' (Australian House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Training 1991:18-26). He concluded that the perspective reflected in the works cited above have multiple implications, ranging from the political, through the social to the personal (p.11).

Many studies highlight the positive outcomes of contextualised literacy in different settings. Among these are studies that examined literacy in the

television work context in Canada (Shohet 2001:2), or more commonly, the workplace (Farrell 2001, Jackson 2000 and Holland 2001, Tannock 1997, Darrah 1997). Other studies include Hull (1997), who illustrated the inflated credentials of access to jobs that is often associated with traditional literacy training, and the often unmentioned mismatch between job requirements and the literacy training provided. Gowen (1996) focused on the examination of workplace literacy in a manufacturing company in the process of moving towards 'total quality' (Black 2001:6). Gowen (1992) found that the programme was an 'attempt to change the behaviour of these workers to bring them into line with management expectations' (Black 2001:5). Holmes and Storrie (1983) studied a Basic Skills retraining programme for retrenched British steel workers and found that the programme was unable to provide the workers with alternative work and was palliative rather than curative.

It is difficult to unreservedly acclaim the argument of New Literacy on the basis of the body of evidence provided by these and other studies. The central reason for this reservation is that the studies essentially focussed on the shortcomings of prevalent arguments. In order to justify the claims of New Literacies without any reservations, it is important for evidence to be provided on how the approach associated with it can better replace what has been done in these studies. One way of doing this is by providing a well-defined domain for its delivery. With the present focus on its use as a medium of learning, it is difficult to see how funders can recognise it as a model that will enable them to justify their outlay on literacy which is informed by their cognitive perception of literacy. While it can be argued that the current

engagement of New Literacies might help to locate the underpinning principles in practice, it is the lack of defined boundaries and domain that makes it a difficult proposition for funders and policy makers.

2.3.3.3 Using Principles of New Literacies in practice

In contradistinction to studies that chronicle the limitations of a traditional perception of literacy, there are a number of studies that report how some of the key principles of New Literacies have been put into practice. Many of the studies in this category have examined the New Literacy approach from the context of literacy learning (Purcell-Gates et al 2002, Brooks, Davies, Duckett, Hutchinson, Kendall and Wilkin 2001a, Stino and Palmer 1999, Cooper and Garside 1996, Brooks, Gorman, Harman, Hutchinson and Wilkin 1996). Other studies illustrating this include Perin (1994) on the correlation between literacy measures taken pre- and post-workplace and the demographics of students' newspaper reading practices, knowledge of current affairs, and learning goals. Posey (1993) showed how the impact of the contextualisation of writing skills in word-processing could effect changes in learners' attitudes through an association with their social context and goals. Fingeret and Danin (1991) evaluated the relationship between a contextualised literacy programme (Literacy Volunteers of New York), changes in students' literacy skills and involvement in literacy practices outside the programme. These studies generally found that not only were learners' skills changing and developing, learners were also more willing to engage in new literacy practices and much more self-confident in their day-to-day involvement with literacy practices.

Similar studies, as reported for example in Kelly et al (2004:97-112), include Fahy and Morgan (1999), who sought to establish the actual state of writing instruction in adult literacy programmes and Moulton (1997) who measured the impact of real world literacy action on students' confidence and literacy abilities. Parrish (1997) reported on how ICT in context can help students become more participatory and cooperative learners while Mlynarczyk (1996) showed how content-related responses, rather than structure-related ones encourage beginner writers. Hansman-Ferguson (1994) illustrated how computer use as an authentic activity and tool of social relationships could aid adults with writing tasks.

Other studies reported in Kelly (2004) include Paratore (1992), who assessed the impact of an intergenerational approach and the contextualisation of adults' literacy learning in shared events between parents and children on the literacy development and use of adult learners; Pomerance (1990) on the use of a collaborative approach; Scane (1990) on the impact of the processing approach; Askov and Folizzi (1990) on the effectiveness of computer based learning on the development of job specific reading and writing instruction; and Forrester (1988), who reported the development of a learner's literacy skills through an intervention drawn from her own experience. Although these studies employed different approaches, they all shared the commonality that they provide evidence to justify the thesis of socialisation, multi-practice, and contextualisation.

Nevertheless, the overriding desire to find justification appears to be a limitation of the New Literacy model because in the drive to justify their claims, they neglect to provide a model for the delivery of literacy for adults. Moreover, the argument around New Literacy suggests that there cannot be any one model of literacy, and by implication, having an instrument like the national core curriculum is not viable, although this is rarely stated explicitly. This opportunity has been missed by the proponents of the New Literacies approach. If one agrees with the suggestion that a common curriculum is not desirable, one of the implications would be that literacy cannot be provided in a centralised form, as it is provided in colleges and adult learning centres now. As has been demonstrated by Lea and Street (2006) in their “Academic Literacies” model, it is possible to develop ‘literacies’ targeted at specific purposes. The responsibility for this must belong to practitioners who in theory acclaim the recognition of the New Literacies ideology. This would present a model that has a flexible and expansive framework, capable of catering for all possible contexts. The outcome of such an approach would be the development of several mini curricula focusing on different contexts including the educational and on bespoke individualised learning.

2.3.4. Critical Literacy

Critical literacy emerged as an aspect of the larger phenomenon of a radical alternative educational perspective to the longstanding liberal view of education (Lankshear 1999). In the context of literacy, this perspective on education began to manifest itself fully by the early 1990s. One of the crucial questions in looking at critical literacy is to determine whether it should be

seen as a distinct discourse of literacy or be categorised under the ambit of a larger sociocultural framework of literacy. Typifying the argument of those who see critical literacy as a component of sociocultural literacy is Lankshear (1999) who draws from Green's (1988) postulations about the three-dimensional nature of literacy. Green (1988) argues, as cited in Lankshear (1999:24), that 'literacy must be seen in 3D, as having three interlocking dimensions--the operational, the cultural, and the critical'. Viewing sociocultural literacy from this perspective carves out a natural space for critical literacy as a level of development on the language and cultural dimensions.

However, there is a case to be made for the appreciation of critical literacy as a totally distinct paradigm. The argument underlying this perception is hinged upon the twin factors of aims and outcomes. According to Demetrian (2005:7), one of the main aims of critical literacy is to link literacy

'to political engagement among the oppressed in the articulation of their own voices: first, in naming what Freire referred to as the sources of their domination, and second, in collectively organising to effect change in the socioeconomic, political order through cultural and non-violent political revolution'.

The outcome would therefore not only impact upon the practice of literacy but also on social and political behaviours. Drawing from Freire, Demetrian (ibid: 8) suggests that the real outcome of critical literacy is to empower the oppressed to develop the ability

` to define the socio-political-economic order, at least in part, on their own terms and the capacity to progressively re-construct it based on their own collective organisation`.

Freire (1970) had established his critical and participatory literacy as totally focused on the concept of humanisation. In Freire's view (p.61), adult literacy learners have an ontological vocation of being 'searchers' for the reality of 'humanisation'. This is in contrast to 'dehumanisation' which is easily embedded within the framework of other literacy paradigms. Freire concludes that (p.28) 'both humanisation and dehumanisation are possible, only the first is man's vocation'.

By contrast, social literacy looks at how the instrument of literacy can be changed within the various contexts in which it is used. In essence, while one is focused on changing the person and together with that, their perception of their place in the world perception, the other appears to focus more on establishing and possibly changing the instrument of literacy, how it is used, and establishing how it comes to mean. It is this distinction that concretises the difference between the perspectives of critical as against social literacy, and which necessitates their separate presentation in this study.

There are three clear typologies in terms of contributions to studies from the perspective of the critical dimension of literacy (Lankshear 1999). The first consists of studies that have sought to present a repudiation of the position of other constructions of literacy. Typifying this class of contribution are the various studies that have been reviewed under the New Literacies approach

to literacy. In particular, contributions such as those of Street (1984, 1995), Barton (1994), Barton and Hamilton (2000), Gee (1996) and Luke (2005) all present constructions of literacy which are rooted in the repudiation of the dominant autonomous model construct of literacy. This is perhaps one of the reasons why many people are inclined to see both the sociocultural and critical dimensions of literacy as belonging to the same paradigm.

The second type consists of studies which, according to Lankshear (1999:25), engage in 'critique of particular texts or specific instances of literacy in use'. This is carried out in order to enhance the development and use of 'techniques which reveal how texts do work and produce effects as elements of larger social practices and discursive coordination'. This presupposes 'drawing on some theory or ideal – ethical, political, educational – as a basis for choosing and employing particular kinds of techniques in the first place---' (See similar arguments in Gee 1998a and b, Luke 1992, Fairclough 1989 and 1992).

The third type reflects studies which interpret texts and then make statements on the basis of the author's preferred ethical, political and educational values (Lankshear 1999). This genre of critical literacy takes an approach that locates the explanation, justification and criticism of the existing modality of, for instance, the structure and operation of school literacy, and the dominance of particular discourses in the workplace within the framework of 'interest serving selection' imposed by a dominant culture and the inherent advantage of larger and more prosperous communities over others.

In line with the classifications made in some studies in the literature (Latour 1987, Knorr Cetina 1992 and Gee 1998a), I believe that it is more fruitful to integrate the three aspects of critical literacy identified above. The ultimate goal(s) of the three layers have a potential convergence. Lankshear (1999:26) anchors this interconnectivity on the argument that social worlds 'are created and sustained by human beings organising and coordinating materials in ways that others recognise; to see as meaningful'. The concern of the three aspects of critical literacy as identified above centres on the same goal of coordinating and organising in particular ways, in order to put across particular meanings.

Gee (1998a:14 -15) takes this notion further by introducing the twin concepts of 'enactive' and 'recognition' work to account for the integrated nature of the various aspects of critical literacy. Arguing from the position that our discursive practice involves (ibid :15) 'attempting to get other people to recognise people and things as having certain meanings and values within certain configurations or relationships', Gee sees enactive work as symbolising 'the various attempts, through conscious and unconscious acts, to get people to recognise our perceptions'. Recognition work, on the other hand, according to Lankshear (1999:26), represents efforts by others to 'accept or reject such attempts-to see or fail (refuse) to see things our way'.

Contributing to this debate, Muspratt, Freebody and Luke (1997:2) suggest that the production, sustenance, transformation and the process of

challenging particular discursive effects is really the core goal of our various attempts and recognitions. From this viewpoint therefore, enactive and recognition works are both political and ethical (Lankshear 1999). From this position, the three aspects of critical literacy could be seen as having a convergence of goals, as they all appear to be concerned with the goal of challenging an existing system and soliciting recognition for a new system. Perhaps the main difference among these aspects of critical literacy is the component that each would like to challenge and that for which they seek recognition. While the first would challenge the learner's and teacher's perception, the second would rather challenge the policies and provision that have conditioned learner and teacher perception of the traditional mode of appreciating literacy and the third would challenge meanings associated with literacy texts. From this position, therefore, critical literacy, including all three aspects, as argued in Lankshear (1999:26), should be seen as 'a political project involving informed enactment and recognition'.

A number of studies have presented critical literacy from the viewpoint of providing the literacy learner with the authority to challenge existing systems. Kucer (2005) presents literacy as a tool that should create the opportunity to 'examine the relationships among power, authority and written discourse' (in Zhang 2005:4), while Luke (2005) sees the role of critical literacy as being one of the tools to challenge the dominant policy slant, which 'are bids to regulate and govern flows of discourse, fiscal capital, physical and human resources across time / space boundaries of educational systems' (p. 1). The implication of this approach is that critical literacy has shifted from a mere

focus on the empowerment of individuals in language skills, to an issue of class and institutional struggles within the larger framework of globalisation.

Other studies which have presented critical literacy from the viewpoint of empowerment include Black (2005) who examined the concept of Fanfiction in Chandler–Olcot and Mahar (2003), and concluded that the success of Fanfiction as a language and literacy development tool hinges on the emphatic presence of ‘peer review, constructive criticism and collaboration within the community’ (Black 2005:18); Cowan (2005) who proposed broad-based organising as a ‘deliberate effort to cross lines of race, class, religion and geography to build organisations with sufficient power to stand and address common good issues in local communities’(p.1), and Evans (2005), who used ‘Technology Literacy’ to conclude that ‘by linking literacy with individual abilities, such definitions fail to acknowledge the ways in which literacy is implicated in power relations’(p.3).

Studies that have presented critical literacy as a tool for challenging the systemic instrument in the field by seeing it as an alternative frame of reference include Demetrion (2005) who links the essence of critical literacy to Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in consonance with the argument of Graff (1987) that:

‘literacy was related to liberty, initiation of social and economic change, national destiny, social justice, the transformation of mentalities and the “awakening of autonomous, critical, constructive minds, capable of changing man’s relationship with nature’(p55).

The (2005) Department of Education of Tasmania publication presents critical literacy from the perspective of the relationship between text and empowerment. According to this document (p.1):

‘Critical literacy involves the analysis and critique of the relationships among texts, language, power, social groups and social practices. It shows us ways of looking at written, visual, spoken, multimedia and performance texts to question and challenge the attitudes, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface’.

The main concern of critical literacy, therefore, is ultimately the realignment of power relationships and structures. It must therefore provide us with different perceptions which take us beyond texts to a level where we can clearly see the embedded social injustices reflected in some of these texts and consequently, induce us to challenge these disadvantages, thus becoming agents of social change. Collins and Blot (2003) locate critical literacy in the ability to flesh out ‘the strong interrelatedness of text, power and identity’ (Weldeyesus 2005:2). This echoes Nakata (2005), who suggested that, because of the dominance of colonial discourses and narratives, it is important that literacy studies in Papua New Guinea should assume a prioritised emancipatory agenda, to deal with the dominant colonial legacies.

MacLachlan and Cloonan (2003) present critical literacy from the perspective of its impact on the literacy learner. For them, therefore, literacy not only ‘challenges perceptions of correctness, it also challenges the positioning of the literacy student’ (p.125). Van-Duzer and Cunningham (2003:1) define critical literacy as going ‘beyond the surface’. For them (ibid), the notion of critical literacy involves attempts at utilising text beyond the level of simple co-

textual interpretation. Critical literacy therefore `encompasses a range of critical and analytical attitudes`.

In her examination of critical literacy as an evolving concept, Comber (2002), like several other scholars, draws upon the model of literacy developed by Freebody and Luke (1990). In their original model, Freebody and Luke presented a four resources frame of literacy that identifies text analysis as a critical component of all literacy incorporating four key roles of code breaker, text-participant, text-user and text analyst. In more recent iterations, however, Luke and Freebody (1997, 1999) have changed the component of roles in their model to practices (Comber 2002). As a result, there has been a transition from a psychological to a sociological perception. Consequently, they now offer four resources as against their previous four roles and four practices (Comber 2002:2). Within this framework, Luke and Freebody (1997:218-222) suggest that critical literacy should consist of those resources that are concerned with interest, multiplicity and conflict, historical and cultural contexts of discourse, comparisons of vocabularies and grammars of related texts, ideological positioning of readers of texts, and the issue of multiple passes through texts. Although this contribution appears to be centrally relevant to reading as a component of literacy, the crucial argument, as elaborated in Luke and Freebody (1999), is that a sociological approach to literacy, through which a niche is carved out for critical literacy, must recognise the diverse cultural and discursive resources that learners bring to classrooms (Comber 2002:2).

Hilary Janks (2000) points to what she sees as the essentially changing nature of critical literacy. She suggested that critical literacy is inescapably linked to political, technological, cultural and social circumstances, concluding that all these concepts are important in the design and delivery of critical literacy.

Some studies examine critical literacy from an ideological position. For example, Bowles, Commeyras, Moller, Payne and Rush (2001) approach the notion of critical literacy from an ideological position. In consonance with Knoblauch and Brannon (1993), they (p.1) submit that:

‘literacy is inherently ideological in that it is “always qualified by the context of assumptions, beliefs, value expectations, and related conceptual material that accompanies its use by particular groups of people in particular socio-political circumstances”.

For them, therefore, critical literacy is driven by ideological leanings and the enactive work must be for teachers and learners to embrace the appropriate ideology. Stables, Soetart, Stoer and Lencaster (1998) examined critical literacy from the viewpoint of political and ideological change and argued that:

‘critical literacy implies the ability to make sense in your own terms of the ideational potential of a text. It includes the ability to get behind the text to interpret it in terms of its ideological underpinnings’ (p.2).

The notion of being critical for Stables et al (ibid) aligns the liberal-humanist tradition often manifested in literary criticism, and with the concept of “critical-emancipatory” knowledge` presented in Habermas (1987). Critical literacy in this respect is focussed on developing the ability of the individual to respond

to the underpinning ideology of any text and not simply to digest it at its surface co-textual level of interpretation. In his study, Degener (2000:3) concluded that 'the most important theme running through the literature is the belief that educational systems the world over are political', as 'decisions about content, methods and resources in education are all politically driven' (p4).

While staying true to the notion of challenging dominant discourses and structures, Shore (1999) sees the ultimate manifestation of critical literacy as evident in the learner rather than in policy or even the teacher. However, she admits that the change effected in the learner through critical literacy must eventually manifest itself in society. Critical literacy from her viewpoint (p.1) 'challenges the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development'.

While recognising the concepts of dominance, class and power as justifications for critical literacy, Macrine (1999) introduced the concept of mobility and continuous change in the appreciation of what the concern of critical literacy must be and suggested that 'Critical multicultural literacy teaching be viewed as ongoing and ever evolving praxis by researchers and teacher educators' (p.6). Based on this, she argued that critical literacy consistently 'calls for theory shaping practice and practice shaping theory' (ibid).

Lankshear (1997:43-48) proposed a construction of critical literacies using the basic semantic imports of the term `critical`, which `imply judging, comparing or evaluating on the basis of careful analysis`, Lankshear identifies two parts to any critical orientation as `the element of evaluation or judgement` and `the requirement of knowing closely, "for what it is" that which is being evaluated` (p.43). The essence of critical literacy therefore lies in the ability to judge and evaluate literacies and the texts that symbolise them, and the ability to fully know the nature of the literacy type that one is engaged with.

The foregoing confirms that there are many variants to the perception of critical literacy. This is hardly surprising, as the notion of being critical is certainly desirable and attractive to educationists and researchers. Recognising this phenomenon of multiplicity of variants, Lankshear (1997:41) appears to account for it when he argues that because `critical` carries positive connotations like any other positive value terms such as:

`freedom, democracy and empowerment` concepts, theories and practices of the critical are constructed in disparate ways, and much for the same reasons: namely, to derive the benefits of the positive connotations of "critical" while at the same time giving expression to larger values, purposes, and traditions that vary greatly from interest group to interest group`.

One way of orderly structuring this disparate generation of different but related ideas is to borrow the scheme presented earlier on as suggested by Lankshear (1997) based on the three main foci of critical literacy. Using this schema enables us to recognise that the ultimate goals of various contributions to the concept of critical literacy can be broadly allocated to these three foci even though disparate terminologies are employed.

Finally, it is important that we highlight what might constitute a weakness of critical literacy. Although critical theorists and educationists would argue that 'schooling is a form of cultural politics' and that it is 'a preparation for and legitimization of particular social life' (McLaren, 1989:160), that schooling always involves power relations, social practices and privileged forms of knowledge 'that support a specific vision of past, present and future' (ibid:161), it is important that we do not get carried away with this perception of the goals of knowledge and education. In the case of critical literacy, and as implied by the various studies we have examined in this section, there appears to be the assumption that the ultimate outcome of literacy can, and in many cases, should only be political. Linked to this is a similar assumption that all the people involved in the acquisition of literacy are either poor, oppressed, minorities or proto-revolutionaries. While it is true to a very large extent that a sizable percentage of those involved in the acquisition of adult literacy fall into the above categories, it is not advisable to postulate universal theories on this basis, as there are certainly significant exceptions to the rule. Subscribing wholly to this perception might render its proponents not only guilty of creating a dominant discourse, similar to those expressed by proponents of autonomous literacy, and which proponents of critical literacy supposedly set out to challenge, but also of creating a myth of dominance and oppression.

2.4. Summary

This section has reviewed several existing studies along the lines of three major paradigms: traditional/cognitive; New/social Literacies; and critical

literacy. It has classified these studies along the lines of their relationship to both theory and practice and has captured the phenomenon of inter-paradigmatic movement, both of the studies and their authors. The review and classification of literacy studies into three paradigmatic types provides an insight into the schema through which the evolution of literacy policies and their attendant curricula will be described in this study. Each phase in this development will be subjected to descriptions in terms of its affinity with the paradigmatic types identified in this review. In this way, it becomes possible to classify the paradigmatic driver behind each developmental phase. Apart from this, this review has mapped out the features of a significant factor in making decisions on a number of options in this study. For example, choices in terms of research approach, methods of data analysis, subject-specific theoretical framework, and curriculum theory in this study are all informed by the researcher's predisposition in the context of the three paradigms. Choices in these areas are made, predominantly, on the basis of the researcher's perception of the affinity of the chosen options to the preferred paradigms. Exploring and defining the features of this pattern of affinity will be the concern of the next chapter in this work.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Issues: Research approach and theoretical framework, methods of data collection and analysis.

3.1. Introduction

A natural expectation in a study of policy evolution would be for the methodology to be significantly informed by a model of policy analysis which draw insights from either Dale's 'linear' perception of policy making (1989), or from the insights of poststructuralist theorising presented in Ball, (1990) and Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992). However, existing studies in the area have demonstrated the inadequacies of a linear approach to policy. Such refutations are argued, for example, in the works of Fowler (2005) and Hamilton and Hillier (2007) who have both opted for different forms of the latter option.

Illustrating the non-linear stance, Bowe et al.'s postulations suggest that 'policy is best thought of as texts constituted by discourses' (O'Brien 1994:1). But even this non-linear stance has been seen as not totally adequate for policy analysis. For example, a perception of policy as 'constituted by discourses' focuses on what has already been encoded as policy text and the way in which this is decoded. This raises the issue of the degree of freedom granted to the decoder of policy text. Recognition of this limitation has necessitated the call for the modification of this model of policy analysis. For example, O'Brien (1994:1) notes, 'All those involved in the policy process are seen to exercise power at the particular points through which it passes'. As such, a perception of policy making from Bowe et al.'s viewpoint, 'may not be the most apposite nor the most complete way of understanding policy' as Evans, Davies and Penny (1994:59) point out, such an outlook 'does not account for the ways that the meanings of a particular signifier, or text, in a

particular situation is ordered, at least in part by material interests, agencies and agents of government, and power relations' (1994:59). Consequently, they suggest that policy discourse should be seen as a process 'which always is constructed and set within moving discursive frames which articulate and constrain the possibilities and probabilities of circumstances and enactment of policy' (Evans et al. 1994, p.60).

Perhaps in response to the above, Fowler (2005) opted for a modification of Bowe, Ball et al.'s policy circle 'that moves continuously between the contexts of "influence", "policy text production" and "practice" (p22). Similarly, Hamilton and Hillier (2007) proposed what they call 'A model of deliberative policy analysis' (P 575) by taking their point of departure from Hajer and Wagenaar (2003). They noted that this approach to deliberative policy analysis 'takes account of this messy reality and is designed to respond to challenges posed by other features of contemporary governance' (ibid). Significantly, this model recognises multiple actors with different investments and resources in the field and therefore advocates 'an interpretative approach to policy analysis' (ibid).

The argument emanating from these alternatives to both the linear and post-structuralist approaches to policy analysis is the recognition of the complexity of policy formation process. The recognition of this complexity has resulted in the call for what O'Brien (1994) calls a renovation of policy theory. While the present study acknowledges the fact that the studies cited above have recognised the complex nature of policy making in the field of literacy, it is the view of this researcher that no one model of policy analysis can sufficiently

account for this complexity. A perception of policy as discourse raises a number of concerns. Evans et al. argue that a mono-dimensional perception of policy as text and discourse can not adequately 'provide a sufficient framework for understanding the complexities of policy, especially the way the government ('state') and 'the subject' are implicated in the construction of the policy process' (1994, p.57). Watts (1993/1994), though more sympathetic to the use of discourse analysis, nevertheless also shares a similar concern: 'For all of the value which comes from an insistence on the discursive character of social action, by itself an emphasis on discourse will not give us the kind of capacity to think the state in its context' (p.121). As such, Watts asserts that:

Too much discourse analysis also displays little sense of change or embeddedness on history and relatively little evidence of the real work of actors in revising and amending and using discourses, and little sense of the contest between discourses. (1993/1994 p.123)

Given these complexities reflected in the policy making process, this research has opted for a different methodological framework which draws from tools, principles and concepts from a range of theories, models and principles. The choice of these is entirely informed by the combination of their mutual compatibility and the nature of the present research. The methodological framework is therefore seen as one of a model of convergence within which different aspects address different components of the complexity exhibited in process of policy making in adult literacy as highlighted below.

Firstly, this research is seen as an analysis of policy process rather than as an analysis of product. In so doing, it agrees with the limitations in the perception

of policy analysis as a mere analysis of discourse as argued by Evans et al.(1994). Thus, although the present research recognises that discourse is a component of policy, it does not see discourse as the entirety of policy. In response to the discourse component of the policy therefore, policy analysis in this research will draw from the tools of a particular model of analysis. In this respect, the analysis of data in this study will draw from Van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (2006). The major reason for the choice of this model is its recognition of the element of cognition in the process of discourse analysis. This becomes significant in the context of the fact that cognition is an unavoidable element of process analysis.

Furthermore, the view held in respect of process analysis and the importance of cognition again induces an alignment with data collection methods which would enable individual and social cognitions to be teased out. As such, methods such as interview, questionnaires, and archival documentary analysis were all employed as a result of the recognition of the need for personal and societal cognition in policy process analysis. Alignment to these methods therefore suggests that the approach to the research should be qualitative rather than quantitative.

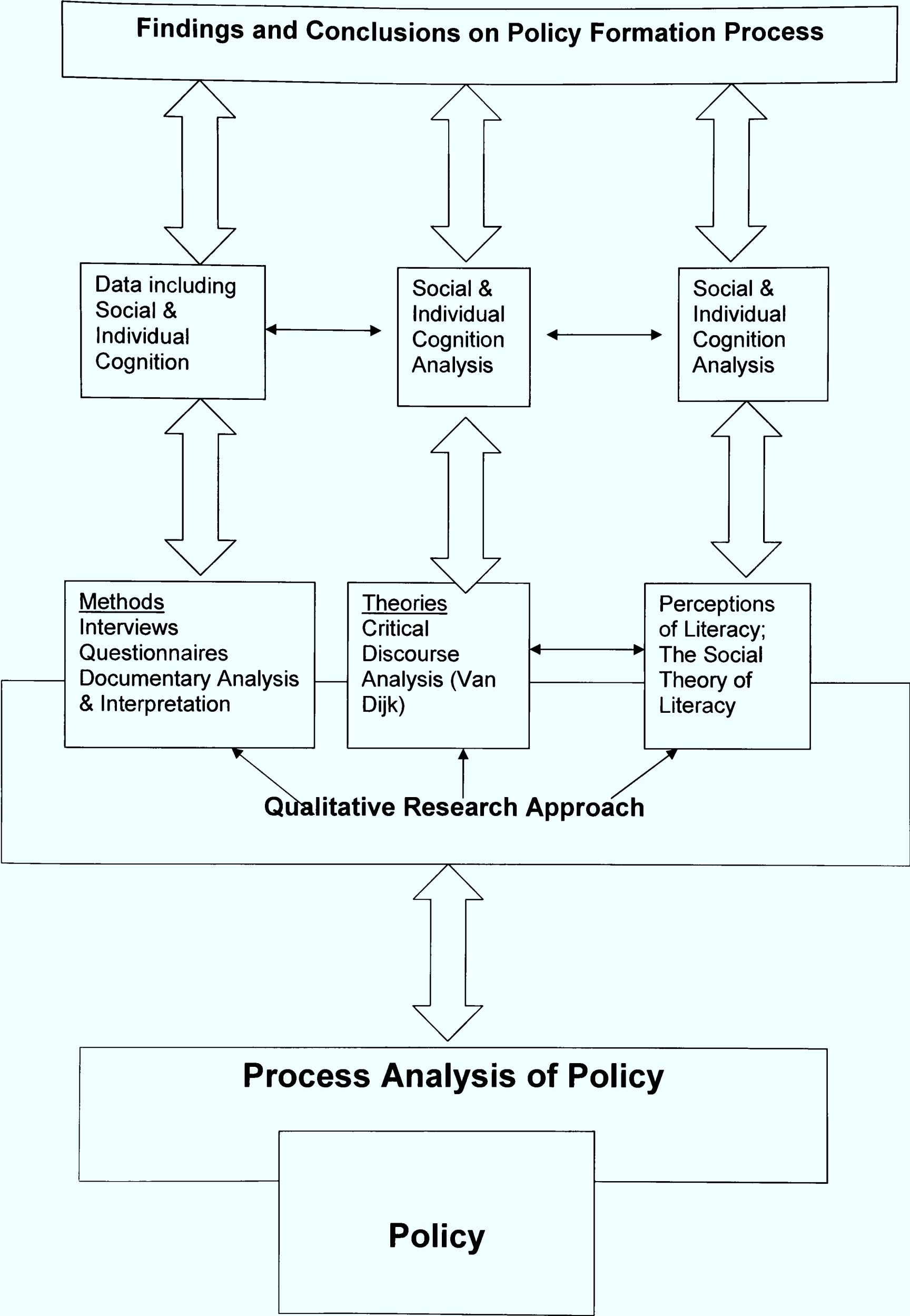
The present research associates significant importance to the perception of literacy held by participants in a policy making event in the field of adult literacy. It considers that there is a symbiotic relationship between literacy policy and perceptions of the policy makers. As such, some elements of a literacy theory, which encapsulates the researcher's perception of literacy is

used in the process of data collection and analysis. Responding to the dictates of this theory necessitates an affiliation to a particular research approach which can accommodate the specific elements of the theory.

Following from the above, it is seen that the complexity of the policy making process that is central to this research encompasses a range of components. The methodology used in this study is therefore one that accommodates all of these components within the same framework. Specifically, an element of Van Dijk's cognitive discourse analysis is preferred in the context of the fact that it allows the analysis of data to incorporate individual cognition. Similarly, elements of the Social Theory of Literacy are utilised, as the theory enables us to draw links between literacy perception and literacy policy making. Both of the above are considered to be viable in research within the framework of a qualitative approach to research. Following naturally from this, methods such as interview and questionnaire are employed not only because they work well within the framework of qualitative approach, but also because they enhance the process of factoring individual cognition into discourse analysis. All of these are enabled by the nature of the research which focuses on process rather than product analysis.

Methodology in this research, therefore, is a reflection of the complexity of the process under investigation. This has necessitated making choices between alternatives with the choices influenced the potential for convergence among the range of tools and theory available. The overall methodology used in this study is therefore a convergence model of policy analysis which draws from a

range of existing tools and theories and with emphasis on how each of them interacts and fits in with the other elements within the structure of the model. This framework can be represented diagrammatically as below. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, elements of theories and tools that constitute this framework will be explored with a focus on the reason for their choice and the potential problems that might arise from their choice.



3.2. Theoretical framework as a determinant of research approach: Linking the social theory of literacy to research paradigm

In this section, two dominant approaches to research will be explored and a choice made between them. Following this, justification for the choice made is then presented. In this case, the justification is based on the factors of difference and convergence between the preferred theoretical framework in the field of literacy and the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research respectively. More importantly, it establishes that the chosen approach can function within the framework of the convergence model suggested above.

3.2.1. Choice of research approach.

Tension between the qualitative approach to research with its range of methodologies and the quantitative approach with its attendant positivist assumptions (See e.g. Demetrio 2005, Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, Mertens 1998, Usher 1996 and Creswell 1994) has been an enduring focus of debates among researchers. Predominantly, the 'official' position of leading research and government paradigms tends to resolve this tension in favour of the quantitative research, which is perceived as evidence-based by its proponents. Such a stand is typified by the observation in the U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan (2002-2007:48) that, 'we will change education to make it an evidence – based field'. By contrast, proponents of the qualitative approach to research, like Kozulin (1990:230), argue that:

`In some studies“purity” has taken precedence over theoretical meaningfulness. This could easily lead to methodological fetishism when the direction of research is dictated neither by theory nor by the subject of inquiry, but by the methods that guarantee the reliable reproduction of data`.

These two contrasting positions then, inform the dominant discourse of discordant paradigmatic allegiances of scholars in terms of making a choice between these research approaches; between the accommodation of ‘fads’ and ‘a lack of visible cumulative progress’ and ‘purity, fetishism’, and a lack of ‘theoretical meaningfulness’ (Demetrian, 2005: 205). Although there are other areas of tension, for instance, in the use of terminologies in the quantitative approach to research (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, Constan 1998a, Pillow 2000, Lincoln 2002 & Creswell, 2003), this section will concentrate on the tension induced by choice of approach, as resolving this tension is very significant for the structure of the present study. Before making a choice between the two major approaches to research, it is important that the essence of each of these approaches is explored.

3.2.2. The quantitative approach

Usher (1996:14) suggests that every research approach naturally subscribes to a number of what might be called epistemological ‘good grounds’. Such assumptions about the quantitative approach have been presented and discussed in different forms (See e.g. Creswell 1994 & 2003, Cohen et al 2000, Philips and Burbules 2000, Denzin & Lincoln 1998, Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, Bell 1993). A synopsis of the major ‘good grounds’ of this

research approach which captures the essence of other positions available in the literature is presented below.

- (1) The world is objective and exists independently of knowers. It consists of what proponents perceive as lawful events and phenomena, which can be discovered and explained only through systematic observation and use of correct, objective scientific methods (Usher 1996). This good ground correlates with the position of Denzin & Lincoln (1998: 196) who see 'objectivity' and the lack of researcher bias as a major feature of the quantitative approach.
- (2) Validity of knowledge claims must be based on observation enhanced by measurement. Hence, inter-subjective replicability must be the most significant indicator of procedural objectivity. This notion of validity, as expressed in Usher (1996) correlates with the twin features of 'external and internal validity' examined in Denzin & Lincoln (1998:186).
- (3) The social world being researched is ordered and therefore the goal of research must be to present an ordered explanation of this orderliness. A quantitative approach will therefore expect research to generate general and universal laws that present the cause and effect relationships of an ordered and patterned world.
- (4) Scientific and social enquiries must be based on the same methods of data collection and finding, and must therefore share a common logic. This echoes what Denzin and Lincoln (1989:186) use the term 'reliability' to represent.
- (5) Finally, epistemological enquiry and critique can be considered pointless. The crucial thing is to ascertain that the right procedural and

methodological steps have been meticulously adhered to. This suggests that the central issue from the perspective of a quantitative approach to research is the process and not the outcome.

Based on these assumptions, three cardinal features of determinacy, rationality and impersonality become inexorably linked to the perceptions inherent in the quantitative approach to research, thus linking it to the classical positivist position, which argues for a precise, quantifiable and scientific viewpoint, and advocates methods such as 'testability, measurement, and the right use of reason' (Usher 1996:11). This perception of the quantitative approach is echoed by Denzin & Lincoln (1998:186) who identify four main criteria for classifying a research approach as quantitative. These are the use of 'disciplined enquiry' as 'internal validity', 'external validity', 'reliability' and 'objectivity' and echo similar assumptions underlying the quantitative approach to research presented in Philips and Burbules (2000).

3.2.3. The qualitative approach

The qualitative approach argues that the critical issues in research should not be generalisation, control, and prediction, which are emphasised by the quantitative approach. Bleicher (1982:3) describes qualitativism as 'taking aims at scientism', which is the essence of the quantitative approach. Emphasising the 'non-scientific' posture of the qualitative approach, Creswell (2003:18) defines it as one in which 'the inquirer makes knowledge claims, based primarily on constructivist perspectives'. Similar perceptions of the

qualitative approach are presented in Mertens (1998), Lincoln & Guba (2000), and Demettrion (2005). The pivotal feature of the qualitative approach according to these works is an emphasis on individualisation of understanding and an allowance for interpretation of evidence unlike the prescriptive leanings of the quantitative approach.

There are two important points to note about the qualitative approach to research. First, the various features identified above tend to emphasise the inherent variation in the nature of the qualitative approach to research. Because it admits what might be seen as subjective and individualised interpretations, there appears to be room for a variety of paradigms and methodologies, as well as creativity in its use. Secondly, it seems that because this approach, when compared to the quantitative approach, can be classified as just emerging, there appears to be some difficulty in terms of generating a precise definition. As noted by Guba and Lincoln (1998:203-204) 'no final agreements have been reached by their proponents [*various qualitative terms and methodologies*] about their definitions, meanings or implications'. The qualitative approach to research therefore encompasses a myriad of methodologies, and sometimes conflicting features which the researcher needs to justify in a research endeavour.

In spite of this, however, the qualitative approach to research is preferred in this study. Towards justifying this choice, this study aims to identify the features of a qualitative approach to research suitable for the investigative

endeavour. In identifying these features, and the reason for their suitability, a basis for the justification of its choice is set. This is what will be attempted in the next section.

3.2.4. Justification for the choice of qualitative approach to research.

Every research study has a close link to a particular theoretical position (Bell, 1993). For example, research works in social studies are usually closely aligned with various political theories including Marxist, feminist and post-modernist (ibid: 34). As a result, researchers must 'organise and classify them [data] into a coherent pattern' (ibid), and 'produce a concept or build a theoretical structure that can explain facts and the relationships between them' (Verma and Beard 1981:10). Along the same line of reasoning, Cohen and Manion (1989:18) conclude that 'models can be of great help in achieving clarity and focusing on key issues in the nature of phenomena'. While all of these suggest that there is a consensus on the position that the nature of research is the crucial factor in making paradigmatic choices in a research study, (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, Usher, 1996 and Clarke & Dawson, 1999.), what has not been clearly defined is the rationale for determining the nature of research. The position taken in this work is that one of the main factors in the determination of the nature of any piece of research is the theoretical framework to which the research subscribes. In the specific context of literacy, which is the focus of this research, this refers to the theoretical and ideological stances towards literacy that are recognised as paradigms in literacy studies.

In his description of what he calls 'Symmetry in researching literacy and student writing', Pardoe (2000:149-157) demonstrates how the theoretical framework generated by symmetry can limit the reliance on a hardcore empiricist approach to research and concludes that:

'Symmetry constitutes a rejection of traditional practice of explaining accepted "truths" and "errors" in science by reference to different repertoires of explanation'.

Also implicitly acknowledging the relationship between theoretical frameworks and approaches, Franchuk (2004:1) observes that:

'methodological cohesion is achieved when the research question fits the method of data collection, method of data analysis, sample size and type, the assumptions of the approach, and the results expected of the approach'. (Italics mine)

In the context of the taxonomical relationship between research terminologies, it is clear that the tools listed above (in italics) are all generated by a research paradigm or a theoretical framework. The implication therefore is that what Franchuk (ibid) calls 'methodological cohesion' can only be achieved through a convergence between the research approach and the theoretical framework. Long and Himestra (1980:66) acknowledge the role of 'theory' in providing a perspective on behaviour — 'a stance to be taken toward data; and to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behaviour'. Similarly, Freebody (2003:38) acknowledges the importance of a theoretical framework when he notes that:

'Whatever a particular research approach may technically denote by way of content, its force is to connote a way of knowing. In that sense the significance of qualitative research is that it points to a paradigm -- a coherent collection of propositions about the world ... rather than just a collection of techniques'.

The relevance of the foregoing is to confirm that theoretical frameworks or paradigms actually do have an important relationship with a research approach. To my mind, this relationship is important enough for one to play a crucial role in the process of selecting the other, in situations in which paradigmatic choices are to be made. More importantly, it reinforces the effectiveness of the convergence model that was proposed earlier on in this chapter. The over-riding factor is the compatibility between literacy theory and research approach. Within the framework of this relationship, three key principles are particularly important, and justify the primacy of place given to the theoretical framework in the determination of a research approach in this study. These are the principles of positioning, juxtaposition and difference.

3.2.4.1. Positioning

This is a term that acknowledges the viewpoint strongly held by a researcher. This relationship is illustrated for example, in Marcus (1998: 401 – 402) with the works of Stacey (1988) and Harraway (1989) and in Creswell (2003:134) with the works of Hutchfield (1986) and Murguia et al (1991) and the injunction of Lather (1986:267) that:

'data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured'.

In this study, the justification for the choice of the qualitative approach to research is to some extent informed by the a-priori position taken in favour of the social theory of literacy as against other perceptions of literacy. In

essence, therefore, my chosen approach to research reflects an affinity with the social theory of literacy.

3.2.4.2. Juxtaposition

The concept of juxtaposition is exemplified by Demetrian (2005) who identifies three theoretical frameworks for analysing literacy in the U.S. Drawing from Mertens (1998), Cherryholme (1988), and Carr and Kemmis (1986), he established that each of these frameworks is related to a particular research approach which correlate with the three approaches established in chapter 2 of this study. Essentially therefore, juxtaposition is in a sense, historically induced. It is perhaps an outcome of years of associating paradigms with approaches, which has eventually grown into a kind of norm.

The key factor responsible for initiating the process of juxtaposition is likely to be the convergence of features of theoretical frameworks with those of research approaches. Emphasising the notion of convergence in juxtaposition, Freebody (2003:52) notes that:

'...nothing new can emerge from the juxtaposing of thoroughly differing constructions and interpretations of a domain of educational practice, when the various languages, the various sciences used to name and demarcate that practice differ in kind'.

Freebody's argument here suggests that the affinity between principles, values of approach and theoretical frameworks plays a significant role in their affiliation, although it is possible to find a middle ground through negotiations and compromises.

3.2.4.3. Difference

Guba and Lincoln (1998:218) suggest that the primary issue in the resolution of paradigmatic tension should not be superiority but the differences of each approach in terms of relationship to the research endeavour. Based on this, they conclude that:

'A resolution of paradigm differences can only occur if and when proponents of these several points of views come together to discuss their differences, and not to argue the sanctity of their views'.

The qualitative approach to research is therefore preferred in recognition of the differences between the features of its alternative, the quantitative approach, and the features of the social theory of literacy. The identified differences have induced the rejection of the quantitative approach and by implication, the acceptance of the qualitative approach.

Although it is on the basis of the three principles identified above that I have chosen a research approach for this study, I shall only illustrate the relationship generated by one of these principles between my chosen research approach and the social theory of literacy. I have opted to examine the points of divergence between the quantitative approach to research and the social theory of literacy, knowing that their points of divergence will almost naturally imply some form of convergence with the qualitative approach, and therefore its endorsement. Before engaging with the aspects of relationship between the qualitative approach to research and the literacy paradigm preferred in this research, it is essential that we identify the propositions of this paradigm of literacy.

3.2.5. The preferred literacy paradigm in the present research

This research subscribes to the position of the social theory of literacy, which is derived from the ideological model of literacy and recognises the culturally embedded nature of specific social practices of reading and writing (Barton and Hamilton 2000). Its features have already been explored in chapter 2: 32-33 of this study. This perception of literacy signifies 'a shift from a conception of literacy located in individuals' to a situation in which literacy is viewed as 'a community resource, realised in social relationships rather than a property of individuals' (Barton and Hamilton 2000:13) and indicates a level of fluidity inherent in the practice of literacy, which should be reflected in the way it is researched. As Barton et al (ibid) conclude, 'We need a historical approach for an understanding of the ideology, culture and traditions on which current practices are based'.

Having established the literacy paradigm underpinning this study, the next task is to look at the features of the two major approaches to research that converge with, and those that differ from this theoretical framework. The ultimate goal of this exercise is to use the elements of convergence and divergence to justify the choice of a research approach preferred in this study thereby proposing a way of resolving the tension of choice of approach in research and again demonstrating the suitability of the convergence model proposed earlier in this chapter.

3.2.6. Difference: Points of Divergence between some Positivist Assumptions and the Social Theory of Literacy

One of the major assumptions of quantitative research assumptions is that the world is objective and exists independently of knowers. As argued in Usher (1996:28), there is no `foregrounding of complexity, uncertainty, heterogeneity and difference` and stands in contrast to the tenets of the social theory of literacy, which argues for a perception of literacy as something that is `embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices`. This point of divergence is particularly salient when we consider the fact that culture is inevitably a complex phenomenon and has the potential of producing moments of uncertainty.

The assumption which eliminates the `knower` but recognises the known, and in the same tradition emphasises the importance of fact over value, is another point of difference. For example, the social theory of literacy acknowledges the concepts of social institutions, power relations, and cultural practices. These three components are crucial indices of value within any society. In admitting them within the framework of the social theory of literacy therefore, there is an inevitable rejection of the positivist assumption.

Another point of divergence is the reliance of the quantitative approach on procedural objectivity, which is enhanced through scientifically measurable processes. In contradistinction, the social theory of literacy admits components of history, cultural practices, power relationships and inference,

none of which can be subjected to scientific procedures of measurement. Based on this fundamental difference, it is difficult to locate one within the structure of the other.

The assumption that the social world is ordered and must therefore generate an ordered explanation of this orderliness and as a result provide universal laws is another point of divergence between the social theory of literacy and the quantitative approach to literacy. The social theory of literacy advocates a movement away from generalisation to the recognition of differences accounted for by a myriad of factors. Subscribing to the framework of the social theory of literacy will therefore demand recognition of the uneven terrain of the sources of knowledge which are usually not admissible in the quantitative approach to research.

Furthermore, positivist research invites us to understand research in the context of a 'logical set of rules of explanation, independent of the world and its social practices, which can distinguish between and judge all knowledge claims' (Usher 1996:13). The social theory of literacy, on the other hand, prefers to explore the historical and cultural locatedness which is inevitably related to the understanding that rationality of knowledge is embedded in situations, and as such, there has to be an adherence to pragmatic diversity of methods, rather than an invariant method. This is another point of divergence between the assumptions of positivist research and the social theory of literacy.

Although not copiously illustrated in this work, it is important to note that in spite of the various points of divergence between positivist assumptions and the social theory of literacy, there are points of convergence too. For example, the social theory of literacy recognises the process of change in the knowledge discovered. Similarly, positivism would recognise change but only if there were an ordered explanation of the process, and a clear definition of the factors responsible for such a change. The major difference would be in the factors that are admitted as responsible for change and the ways in which change is measured. In this context therefore, qualitative work could be seen as indicative of issues to be explored further, including by some quantitative work in a mixed method research. It is therefore clear that the social theory of literacy is not irrevocably exclusive of the use of the quantitative approach to research.

The foregoing provides a justification for the argument that the preferred theoretical framework might ultimately be the main determinant in making paradigmatic choices in any research. This correlates with Usher's (1996) conclusion that research methods 'are embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world (an ontology) and ways of knowing that world' (an epistemology) and Foddy's identification of the need to explore the 'theoretical framework within which the methodological assumptions underlying the use of verbal data in social research can be discussed' (1993: 12). However, to assume that there would always be a simple one-to one relationship of divergence and convergence between research approaches and theoretical frameworks is to be over-simplistic. This is where the need for

a mixed method approach, as presented in Creswell (2003) might find a niche. The solution might be to adopt the injunctions of Guba (1990) who concludes:

‘The researcher-as bricoleur cannot afford to be a stranger to any of the paradigms----- He or she must understand the basic ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of each, and be able to engage them in dialogue’ (Cited from Denzin and Lincoln (1998:191).

The manifestation of the principle of the researcher as a bricoleur in this study is reflected in the convergence model. The model as illustrated at the beginning of this chapter provides a framework within which a range of principles, theories and methods can be used collaboratively, thus creating a form of dialogue among them, as long as they are mutually compatible. It is within this understanding, and in the structure of this ‘dialogue’ that the manoeuvrability for resolving the problem of divergence between theoretical frameworks and research approaches ultimately lies.

3.2.7. Summary

In this section of chapter three, Framework of a convergence model is proposed as suitable for addressing the complexities inherent in policy analysis. Crucial to this framework are the principles of mutual compatibility and suitability. On the basis of this, a case has been made for the choice of the qualitative approach to research as the preferred option because there is substantial convergence between the underpinning values of qualitative research and the researcher’s perception of literacy. By contrast, there is substantial divergence between the value positions of the quantitative approach to research and the tenets of the social theory of literacy. This

argument is fostered by the recognition of the relationship between the chosen research approach and the theoretical frameworks available in the subject area. Having established this relationship between the social theory of literacy and the qualitative approach to research, it is important that all other tools of research share values and principles with the chosen approach and theoretical framework within the framework of a convergence model, in order that they can interact fruitfully within the framework of the convergence model proposed earlier. Identifying such tools and relating them to the values and tenets of the chosen research approach and tenets of the theoretical framework is the concern of the next two sections in this study.

3.3. Data collection and analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis

This section outlines the framework for discussing data in this research. As has been argued in the preceding section, methods of data collection and analysis in any research work should naturally exhibit a measure of affinity with both the approach to research and the theoretical paradigm the researcher associates with. This is in line with the reasoning behind the convergence model proposed earlier in this chapter and is explored below.

3.3.1. Data analysis

'Inquirers explicitly identify their biases, values and personal interests about their research topic and process' (Cresswell 2003:184). One way in which this bias manifests itself is through the prism of the instrument of data analysis. In this regard, the researcher plays a pivotal role because his or her personal biases will inevitably dictate the manner in which research data are collected and admitted as evidence and, ultimately, the way in which data is analysed.

In consonance with this line of reasoning, Clarke and Dawson (1999:66) declared that 'in qualitative research the researcher is the main instrument of data collection: maintaining a distance from the data is not an option'. For this research, I propose to use a CDA framework developed by Van Dijk (2006). In addition to researcher bias, there are other specific reasons for the use of this framework as presented below.

3.3.2. Why Discourse Analysis?

'Policy making embodies the wider context of those involved in policy making' and 'What people do, and what they refrain from doing, is also shaped by what the prevailing discourses allow' (Hamilton and Hillier 2006:22). As this research is focused on what can be described as the impact of thought and ideology on policy and practice, it requires a method of analysis to drill through the superficial to the underlying core of policy. In essence, this research in part focuses on discourse making process and on the elements of cognition that played a part in this process. It is expected that the use of some specific tools of Discourse Analysis will achieve this in this research while dialoguing comfortably with other tools and theories employed in the study.

Walker and Myrick (2006:549) note that, 'Qualitative data analysis seeks to organize and reduce the data gathered into themes or essences, which in turn, can be fed into descriptions, models, or theories'. The framework of Discourse Analysis to be used in this research recognises both socio-cognitive themes and individual cognition as a basis of discourse generation.

These themes, therefore, would function as a framework for organising and reducing the data collected.

Finally, the choice of Discourse Analysis is informed by its affinity to the research paradigm this researcher subscribes to in the field of literacy studies. As suggested in the preceding section, we need to consciously map the converging features of available approaches and methods to the paradigms available to us in our specific subject areas. As an adherent to the principles of the social theory of literacy, I recognise the relationship between the theory and features of Discourse Analysis. In particular, the recognition of different layers and contexts in the generation of discourse converges with the notion of social contexts in the perception of literacy as proposed by the social theory of literacy. There is therefore a match between the orientation and goals of the two theoretical positions which are expected to facilitate the researching endeavours involved in this study.

3.3.3. Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis (henceforth DA), has been utilised and described in several previous studies (Fairclough (1992, 2004, and 2005, a, b, c, and Van Dijk (2006). Together with many of its variants, like Critical Discourse Analysis as developed by Fairclough (1992, 2003), DA has become an established paradigm in linguistics and is rapidly extending its frontiers in the area of social sciences research (Brodscholl 2005). This extensive use implies that there is no homogenous model of DA framework and that it could be adapted to match a range of requirements in varying research endeavours.

What follows therefore is the exposition of one model of DA, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, to be used in this research and the reason for its choice.

Preceding its emergence as an established method across disciplines, DA had essentially been utilised as a tool limited in focus and concentrated on particular disciplines. Its models can generally be grouped under two subheadings of the linguistic/textual and the critical/ inter-disciplinary (Fairclough 1992). While the former are generally seen as 'non-critical' and merely involved in 'describing discursive practices', critical approaches go beyond this to the extent of also:

'showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants'. (ibid: 14)

In the case of the former, the main emphasis is on linguistic markers and how they contribute to the interpretation of text. In the case of the latter, it includes the application of a range of social theories, which are drawn upon in giving meanings to the text being analysed. This suggests that the former is more interested in analysing the end product while the latter places importance on the analysis of the processes that generate the product. This classification is acknowledged in a number of studies. Brodscholl (2005:4) highlights the difference between linguistic DA which focuses on linguistic analysis of text and CDA, which emphasises 'the productivity of combining linguistic theory and social theory'. Similarly, Van Dijk (2006) notes the difference between approaches to DA that are purely linguistic in nature, describing them (ibid: 3)

as those models that have 'a strong tendency to uniquely or primarily focus on language, talk or text itself' and classifying them as 'autonomous approaches', and those that are "contextual". For proponents of the latter therefore, a variable, such as the social structure, only has relevance when it is 'procedurally consequential' for talk or text (Van Dijk 2006). The foregoing does not, however, rule out the possibility of iteration between the two. Indeed, some analysis may depend on the interaction between process and product. This study will not, however, engage with linguistic DA, as 'The object of analysis is linguistic texts, which are analysed in terms of their own specificity' (Fairclough 1992:35), as this might shut out a number of features that the present study holds important. Rather, it will employ a critical framework proposed in Van Dijk (2006) which can better cater for the extra-linguistic analysis that is the goal of this research.

3.3.4. Critical DA

The linguistic models of DA have evolved into a more robust framework of analysis commonly described as Critical Discourse Analysis. From a seemingly linguistic starting point, CDA has been further employed in diverse forms and fields. Illustrating this diversity of model and field of employment are studies such as Pecheux, Henry, Poitou and Haroche (1979) and Pecheux (1982), Van Dijk (1985, 2006) and Fairclough (1992). The approach to CDA proposed in Van Dijk (2006) is seen as relevant to this study because it is seen as providing the framework that is most suitable for achieving the goals of this research. In this respect, it provides the model for recognising

and factoring the concept of cognition which is seen as highly significant in the analysis of the process of discourse construction.

Preceding the framework of CDA proposed by Van Dijk (2006) are other models like Fairclough (1992 and 2003), which has been exhaustively analysed in a number of studies (See e.g. Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, Weiss and Wodak 2003 and Brodscholl 2005). Crucially, Fairclough's model, which uses discourse 'more narrowly than social scientists do to refer to spoken or written language use' (Fairclough 1992:62) and emphasises language use, differs from Van Dijk's framework in one significant respect: the recognition of cognition and ideology as features of context in the deconstruction and construction of discourse. This difference is the major driver in the choice of Van Dijk's framework.

Van Dijk's framework is premised on the difference between the examination of the 'grammatical, stylistic, rhetorical, pragmatic, argumentative, interactional or other structures that define the various dimensions' of speech, and the 'various environments of speech' (2006:3). His approach differs significantly from other models as he recognises the importance of the 'cognitive context' (p.5) of Discourse Analysis, advocating the utilisation of 'relevant knowledge, ideologies and other socially shared beliefs' (ibid) in the analysis of the properties and social functions of text. While this converges with Fairclough's approach in the recognition of the importance of extra-linguistic factors, Van Dijk emphasises cognition which Fairclough downplays. This can be explored further to acknowledge the importance of individual

cognition as against group/societal cognition. Furthermore, Van Dijk's 'context', which he (p.8) labels 'free context', has 'no obvious boundaries, includes 'vast sociological, political, and anthropological studies' of all aspects relevant to the discourse under examination, 'does not directly influence discourse at all' (p.7) and relies on 'interfaces' which differ one from another and, as such, 'are not objective or deterministic'(p.9). Rather, they are 'subjective participant interpretations, constructions or definitions of aspects of the social environment' (ibid). In a policy-making setting, therefore, its relevance can reflect the power relations between individual participants/group of participants in terms of the levels at which their influence manifests in Discourse Analysis. This individualisation of context enables what might be seen as 'subjective interpretation' and the creation of 'alternative, fictitious or misguided definitions of situation, as long as the speaker or writer sees it that way' (p.10). This, in my opinion, is very significant in the analysis of policy, as it is logical to accept that policy construction is influenced by subjective interpretations of the social situation as well as definitions informed by the view of participants involved in policy development.

Furthermore, context, as argued by Van Dijk (p.12) must have observable consequences even if it is unobservable itself. Van Dijk's argument here is that, regardless of our perception of what constitutes context, be it defined as situational or societal constraints, or, as he would prefer, a mental construct, it is usually unobservable. What is observable however, is the impact of context on discourse. For example, in the formulation of policy, it is difficult to identify

the knowledge/value position that underpins a particular policy unless we look at the policy itself. In other words, we can only have a full appreciation of the product by looking at elements of the process that generated it. This is one situation in which the product might inform our analysis of the process.

Another relevant feature of cognitive context is that it must be part of a planned communicative event. Van Dijk argues (p.14) that:

'people seldom participate in talk-in-interaction without having at least a vague idea about what they are going to talk about, with whom, as what, when and where'.

These positions can therefore only be taken if 'relevant social cognitive essence is input into the planning process' (ibid). For example, in a policy development setting, it is assumed that participants would not offer a position without examining what they know, or feel they know, and therefore the position they take relative to their knowledge or perceived knowledge. In this case, though, I put emphasis on perceived knowledge, as this allows us to factor in the element of subjective interpretation of what is admitted as knowledge.

Finally, Van Dijk's context must be able to 'influence what people say and especially how they do so' (p.15). For participants in a communicative event, such influential contexts, as manifested in social knowledge, must be shared to some extent, and in most cases, taken for granted. If, for example, a participant in a policy development setting is inclined towards a socialist form of governance, it is assumed that such a stance is informed by the

participant's knowledge, or perceived knowledge, of such a system of governance.

While there are many other features to Van Dijk's framework, the features highlighted above are seen as very significant for this research for the following reasons. Firstly, the research is historical in nature, as it seeks to identify contextual factors in the construction of a past communicative event. To achieve this, it is essential that a framework that recognises the permanence of cognition as a feature of context in contrast to other features which might change. This need is most catered for by Van Dijk's framework. Secondly, Van Dijk's recognition of cognition allows us to factor in the role of ideology which is essentially manifested in the cognitive realm. As such, the use of Van Dijk's framework will facilitate the recognition of the role of knowledge, belief and, therefore, ideology in the construction of discourse in general and the construction of policy in particular. It is for these reasons that Van Dijk's model of CDA is preferred in this research. As he contends (p.28),

'Undoubtedly universal is the knowledge component of context models: no communication, interaction or discourse is possible without postulating that participants share knowledge, and mutually monitor such knowledge and its changes'.

3.4. Nature of research, data collection methods and process of data analysis

3.4.1. Nature of research

This research is conceived as a form of historical research in that it seeks to tease out information in order to draw conclusions about past events. While

the conclusions drawn are expected to contribute to the development of theoretical positions developing from the set out hypotheses, they will, in some cases, rely on existing theoretical positions in order to account for events and their interpretations. This classification of historical research draws from the perception of Cohen et al. (2000:158) who see historical research as 'the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events'.

3.4.2. Sources and processes of data collection

Data for this research is collected from three main sources. These are through documentary analysis, interviews and questionnaires. Each of these sources, a reflection on their limitations, and strategies employed in this research to surmount them are presented below. Using these sources enhanced the opportunity to input personal cognition into the data collection and analysis.

3.4.2.1. Documentary Sources

Data from documentary sources can be classified into two types. Cohen et al. (2000:161), drawing from a range of previous studies in which similar perceptions are expressed (Best 1970, Hill and Kerber 1967, Travers 1969), identify two broad types of documentary sources of data collection. These are: primary sources and secondary sources, which may be used in the absence of, or to supplement, primary data. In the context of this research, primary documentary data are essentially archival in nature. Collecting data from this source was particularly facilitated by the existence of a dedicated archive for

literacy development: the Changing Faces archives at the University of Lancaster. What is significant about data collected from this source is its direct relationship with the evolution of the policy under investigation in this research. It is therefore seen as 'original to the problem under study' (Cohen: *ibid*). Secondary documentary data in this study consisted predominantly of studies that are reviewed in the literature thus matching the description of secondary sources as 'those that do not bear a direct relationship to the event being studied' (Cohen et. al. 2000:161).

3.4.2.2. Justifying the use of documentary data

Documentary data sources are often considered limited, as they may sometimes not be seen as independent and objective sources (Cohen et. al. 2000, Clarke and Dawson 1999). Indeed, in choosing documentary analysis as one of the methods of data collection, the present researcher takes cognisance of the fact that documentary sources cannot constitute 'independent, objective records of events or circumstances' (Clarke & Dawson, 1999:85). It is also recognised that there are many issues and factors that will not be overtly expressed in documents. This underlines the relevance of the injunctions of Scott (1990:34) that 'Texts must be studied as socially located product'. In order to reduce the effect of this shortcoming of documentary sources of data collection, an attempt is made to further validate whatever is deduced from the documents by confirming them through other sources. This introduces the notion of triangulation that is advocated as one of the main procedures for validating data (See Bell 1993, Robson 1993, Clarke and Dawson 1999, Cohen et al 2000). This in itself has an impact on the

process and order of the research. Documentary data used in this study are therefore supplemented and validated through the use of other sources, in this case, interviews and other documents.

3.4.2.3. Interviews

Interviews were used to elicit data from two main subject groups in this study. Each of these groups was interviewed in order to collect data relative to specific periods in the evolution of literacy policy and curriculum. The first group were as many members of Sir Claus Moser's working committee as it was possible to interview (8), and who were directly responsible for recommendations that did much to shape the formulation of the contemporary literacy policy. The second subject group is made up of a group of former literacy practitioners who were active during the 1970s but have moved on to other roles like researching and management. They have therefore been involved in the development and delivery of literacy curricula over the last several decades. Information collected from this group of respondents is targeted at analysing policy development from the 1970s.

In administering the interview component of this research, ethical issues were taken into consideration. Issues such as the dynamics of the interview setting as well as the sequence and framing of the interview were all given due consideration (Patton 1980, Kvale 1996, Cohen et.al. 2000). Consent in respect of participation and recording was sought and secured from all potential respondents prior to the commencement of interview. The nature

and goals of the interview and the issues to be explored were clearly established as part of the negotiation process.

The interpersonal and interactional aspects of an interview refer to the emotional ramifications of communicative events in the course of the interview (Cohen et al. 2000). In order to address this, the interviews were designed to be semi-structured, as against a structured or closed quantitative form of interview. This structure provided opportunities to accommodate both the interviewer and interviewee, for the researcher to drop prompts into the conversation from time to time, and to meet the requirements of 'benevolent dynamics' (Cohen et al 2000) in the course of carrying out the interviews. While giving free rein to the interviewees in terms of related topics, the course of the interview, and indeed, the closure of the interview, the semi-structured design also catered for 'the likely asymmetries of power in the interview' (Cohen et al. 2000:279), thus ensuring that the interviewees were seen as equal partners and in many cases were part of the process of drawing up the agenda for the interview. Furthermore, conscious efforts were made to ensure that the language employed in the interview was accessible to all respondents. As suggested by Patton (1980:225), the issue of language use does not simply emphasise the importance of 'clarity in questioning'. Rather, it goes further to include a researcher being conversant with 'what terms the interviewees use about the matter in hand, what terms they use among themselves, and avoiding the use of academic jargon'.

Along the lines of the injunctions of Cohen et al. (2000:280), consideration was given to the sequence and framing of the interviews. As such, 'Easier

and less threatening questions, non–controversial questions` were addressed earlier in the interviews. This ensured that the interviewees were able to settle into the interview process without feeling threatened.

Finally, interviewees were given the opportunity to confirm that the transcript of interviews adequately represented their views. Each interviewee was sent a transcript of their interview with a request for them to confirm and correct the content if necessary. This provided a form of guarantee to the interviewees that their viewpoints were accurately presented.

It is important to note that the problem of ‘researching the powerful’ (Walford 1994) manifested itself in the use of interviews in this research. In particular, the existence of what Fitz and Halpin (1994:38) described as ‘gatekeeping’ was significantly problematic as access to many members of the committee was denied by ‘gatekeepers’ who cited the Official Secret Act and what Fitz and Halpin (194:41) refer to as the ‘Osmotherly Rules’ as their excuse. However, drawing from the experience reported in Fitz and Halpin (1994) who encountered similar problems but found that ‘Support from the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), we believe, worked in our favour, contributing to our credibility as serious researchers under institutional obligations to do something with our material’(p 41). In the context of this research, letters endorsed by the ethics committee of the university seemed to ease this problem to some extent. This is an issue that needs to be reflected upon in future research of this nature.

3.4.2.4. Justifying the Choice of Interview Method

Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to have some measure of control over the research instrument, while at the same time following a flexible format, which allows the researcher to elicit more qualitative information from the interviewee (Clarke & Dawson 1999). This measure of flexibility is one reason for using this form of interview in this study.

Another reason for the use of the semi-structured interview format is the recognition of the status of the respondents. Many of the respondents are highly placed and knowledgeable professionals from various fields with vast experience of engaging with the problem under study. In order for the research to benefit fully from the insights and information at the disposal of interviewees, it is important that the data collection tool is one that provides them with the flexibility to fully present the information to which they have access.

While it is true that the use of interviews support Van Dijk's model of CDA, the present researcher recognises the frailty that accompanies the reliance on cognition. How, for example, do we cater for failed memories and deliberate misrepresentations of cognition which some interviews might present? The response to these issues in this research was to adhere to the principles of triangulation (Bell 1993). In particular, with interview and questionnaire participants, deliberate efforts were made to validate information through other participants and through the analysis of documentary evidence.

3.4.2.5. Questionnaire

An on-line survey in the form of a questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool in this study in response to the issues of resources and time, which were particularly significant with the subject group of current practitioners, who are not only numerous, but widely disposed. It was therefore felt that a questionnaire administered electronically would adequately cater for this subject group. At the early stage of data collection, the questionnaire was installed on the university portal and members of the target group, identified through a practitioners' network, to which the researcher also belongs, were invited to contribute. However, low survey return rates and high non-response rates were some of the problems that emerged. Problems with accessing the university portal, either because of limited technical expertise or time constraints also contributed to a very low response rate. These limitations were addressed through the use of individual email messages. This approach subsequently increased the number and quality of responses to the questionnaire.

The use of an On-line questionnaire in this study has implications for the research process and requires some reflection. Survey is one of the most frequently used methods for empirical research in the social sciences (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch 1996, Kotzab 2005) with its self-administered form like postal or mail surveys more commonly used because they provide inexpensive and easily administered results from a large number of respondents (Malhotra & Birks 2000; Berekoven *et al.* 2001). These features have been further emphasised with the advent of the electronic

survey which can reach more people at less cost and with reduced demand on the time of the researcher.

Before administering the questionnaire, full thought was given to the potential implications of its use. For example, consideration was given to the possibility that: 'The questionnaire would always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent' (Cohen et al. 2000:245). To compensate for this intrusion, an attempt was made to secure the consent, through a cover letter, of potential respondents. The letter sought to establish their right to respond to any part of the questionnaire, their right of withdrawal, right to refuse to respond to particular aspects of the questionnaire and finally, the anonymity of their responses, so that the research was not seen as a threat. All of these are issues that have been identified and associated with the ethics of administering questionnaires in research and for which there have been unequivocal demands that a researcher must plan and account for (Sudman and Braburn 1982).

Finally, the questionnaire was piloted, being administered to three subjects with similar profiles to members of the group for which it was designed. The analysis of responses to the pilot questionnaire was then used to inform modifications including re-wording, deletion and the introduction of other terms and concepts.

3.4.2.6. Limitations of using a questionnaire in this research

The use of a questionnaire raised a number of problems in this study. Echoing the findings of earlier studies, issues such as low survey return rates and high item non-response rates in the use of this instrument, no control over the survey situation regarding the way questionnaires are completed (Mentzer & Flint 1997, Atteslander 2000, Churchill & Iacobucci 2005) were some of the problems created by the use of this method. In the case of electronic survey, an additional problem is the limitation of potential respondents in terms of dealing with what might to them be complex packages and processes. In response to the problem created by the complexity of using the portal, simple versions of the same questionnaire were administered through individual email addresses. To this simple way of disseminating the questionnaire, the response was 2000% higher than the response to the more complex portal based questionnaire. Using the email also helped to solve the problem of clarifying issues with respondents as clarifications were sought and provided through the email in order to enrich the qualitative data collected from this source. This raises the issue of making assumptions about the skills of potential respondents in the use of IT, and potentially, overlooking the aspect of the psychological comfort of respondents. These are aspects that I should certainly consider in future research. As this experience has shown, more modern is not necessarily more effective.

3.4.2.7. Justifying the use of questionnaire in the present research.

In spite of its potential limitations as identified above, the use of a questionnaire in this research had a number of advantages. Firstly, in the context of time and scarce resources, it enabled the researcher to reach a

wide range of potential respondents. Secondly, because of its anonymity, it enabled many respondents to give their opinions without feeling inhibited.

3.4.3. Sampling

The quality of a piece of research not only stands or falls by the appropriateness of its methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted (Cohen et. al. 2000, Morrison 1993). Sampling as an issue in research focuses on defining the population of potential and actual participants in the quest for data. It focuses on decisions on the number of participants, how they were selected, types of participants, and the relationship between the different types of available participants.

Cohen et al. (2000:93) advocate that 'Researchers must take sampling decisions early in the overall planning of a piece of research'. They further identify (ibid: 92-93) four important factors to be considered in respect of sampling decisions in any piece of research. These are the size, representativeness and parameters of the sample, access to the sample, and the sample strategy to be used. It is, however, important to note that most researchers agree that there could be no one definitive response to any of these factors (See Cohen et al. 2000, Oppenheim 1992, Borg and Gall 1979, Moser and Kalton 1977). One conclusion many commentators appear to have arrived at is encapsulated in the assertion of Cohen et al (2000:95) that 'the essential requirement is that the sample is representative of the population

from which it is drawn`. This injunction formed the basis of the sampling decisions made in this research.

3.4.3.1. The sample size

The Moser committee was made up of fourteen members. The original plan was to interview all the members of this group. However, this was impossible as some members of the committee declined to participate. Because of this, it was only possible to interview eight (8) members of the group. I consider this number sufficient because of the level and number of convergences that occurred in the information they provided, which helped confirm the extent to which each interviewee's response was representative of what transpired within the committee.

Within the second group (long-term researchers/practitioners), it was impossible to prescribe a fixed number of respondents for the simple reason that not many members of this group are still available to interview. While a few have passed away, quite a few have relocated and the sheer constraint of time and resources limited the extent to which this researcher could invest the time and effort needed to locate them. This limitation in terms of number was, however, addressed in the context of the level of consistency of contributions made by the interviewees.

With the third group (current practitioners), awareness of issues became a significant factor. Originally, the plan was to interview as many as possible, using various networks of practitioners. However, the twin factors of distance

and limited resources necessitated a re-think. In the end, the views of members of this group were collected through the use of questionnaires, which were administered electronically. A total of sixty-five participants responded and it was felt that this was sizable enough to represent the range of opinions held within the group. This is because, as time went on, a sustained pattern of consistency began to emerge in the responses of members of this group.

3.4.3.2. Representativeness and parameters of the sample, access and sampling strategy

With respect to the participants interviewed in this research, the issue of representativeness and the parameters of the research were dictated by factors out of the control of the researcher. With the first subject group, consent, as noted earlier, was a crucial factor. Similarly, with the second and third groups, the issue of representation was determined by those available and willing to contribute to the research, and as such, was taken out of the researcher's hands. This might be seen as particularly significant in the context of gender distribution with the second group. Of the ten participants interviewed, only one (10%) was male. While this might paint a lopsided picture in terms of gender, it is representative of majority of practitioners in the 1970s who were female. This distribution pattern is corroborated by the classification of literacy practitioners provided in Hamilton and Hillier (2006) and Fowler (2005). In the light of this, therefore, it was felt that the limited representation of male respondents among this subject group is not unrepresentative of the entire group.

3.4.4. Process of data analysis

The process of data analysis is to a large extent informed by the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis presented in the preceding section of this chapter. Data analysis is initiated by the identification of events and issues, which are explored to accentuate a number of contextual features including the cognitive. The analysis then goes on to trace how these features of cognitive context and the themes they generate have interacted with the process of policy formation during the specific period under analysis. Similar processes were employed by other scholars in the literature although utilising a different nomenclature, as evidenced in Hamilton and Hillier (2006) and Barton et al (2006) and their use of the term 'time line' to signify their own social reality. The key point with the process is that it creates a framework for linking projection to reality, thus underscoring the perception of discourse analysis as socially and contextually significant. As noted by Hamilton and Hillier (2006:27), 'The timeline formed a backbone against which our history of ALLN was fleshed out'. In the case of the present research, social events and the perceived cognitive contexts, individual and social, emanating from them, and from which they in turn emanate, formed the 'backbone' against which the interpretation of discourse was fleshed out.

Chapter 4: Emergence of literacy policy and practice in the 1970s.

4.1. Introduction

In chapter 2, this study explored the movement of literacy perception between paradigms in a number of studies. This chapter seeks to trace the pattern of this movement in the evolution of literacy policy in the UK in the 1970s. Conclusions drawn in this chapter were informed by data collected through interviews of subjects in group 2 and documents from the Changing Faces archive. Although there is an element of history to it, it is by no means an attempt at providing a comprehensive account of events during this period. Rather, it will highlight significant events, identify the themes generated by these events, and examine their impact on the direction of policy and curriculum development. Having done the above, the section will then seek to draw a link between these events and policies and the perception of literacy to which they align.

While some scholars have described the 1970s as lacking a definitive literacy policy (see e.g. Limage 1987:293), others differ from this view. For instance, Hamilton (2006) argues that adult literacy was first identified as a national policy issue in the UK in the mid-1970s. This conflict in perceptions can be resolved if policy initiatives in the 70s are recognised as originating from, and driven mostly by, non-governmental stakeholders. I therefore see the 1970s as an era of practice-driven policy, in which a myriad of initiatives mostly originated from practitioners and their funders. Informing several of these contributions were various socio- cognitive themes which emanated from an aggregation of the contributors' social reality.

4.2. Significant Events in the Evolution of Policy and Practice in the 1970s

The first of a series of significant events in the evolution of literacy policy and practice in the 1970s was the publication of the Russell report on adult education. Significant among its recommendations was the desirability of greater cooperation between LEAS and other agencies to provide for 'disadvantaged people' (Russell 1973, Fieldhouse 1996, and Fowler 2005). In essence, it identified a group within society that demanded the attention of both the government and the citizenry in general. One interviewee in group two encapsulates this when she declares that, 'but what the Russell Report did was to put on the agenda the importance of Adult Education for what they then called the disadvantaged adult' (Respondent 028:1). The relevance of the report lies in the fact that it linked the group of citizens who had problems with literacy to a wider group of disadvantaged people.

Another significant event was the British Association of Settlements' (henceforth BAS) series of campaign activities. The BAS, it can be argued, kick-started the development of literacy policy and practice during this period through the execution of a national survey, which quantified the extent of the literacy problem (Hamilton and Hillier 2006), and the launch of The Right to Read campaign (henceforth RRD) with a charter demanding that 'the government of the United Kingdom undertake a commitment to eradicate adult illiteracy by a reasonable date, in particular, 1985' (Limage 1987:302). The campaign was organised in the context of a social reality of 'two nations on the verge of confrontation, the labouring poor and the wealthy middle

class, which voluntary bodies sought to reconcile' (ibid). The BAS was one of the voluntary bodies which were created with this goal of societal reconciliation in mind and with a vision that:

'the notion of conflict might be avoided if young men from the universities of Cambridge and Oxford established "settlements" in the heart of working class districts and there provided instruction to the labouring poor'(ibid).

This was a reiteration of the Victorian notion of settlement which indicates that the BAS interest was informed by a drive for societal reconciliation on one hand, and a form of advocacy on the other.

The development of programmes by the British Broadcasting Corporation (henceforth BBC) broadcasted on prime time television was also significant. This contrasts with the notion that it merely 'publicised the issue and pushed for the development of local responses' (Hamilton and Hillier 2006:9). There was undoubtedly a deeper level of involvement with the BBC and this manifested in the declaration to launch a three year project of radio and television broadcasting programmes in 1974 which added a valuable urgency to the growing campaign and brought forward many new volunteers in time for at least a proportion of them to be trained before students came asking for help. It could also be seen as highly instrumental to the government's decision to support funding for materials and training in order to meet the anticipated demand for literacy training. The development of resources through the radio programme 'Teaching Adults to Read' in 1975, the advanced series of 'On the Move' launched in October 1976 and repeated between 1977 and 1978, and the radio component, 'Next Move' launched in the spring of 1977, are all indicative of the BBC's contribution to resource development. More

inadvertently than by design, the first phase in what some might today call blended learning originated from the BBC's involvement with the adult literacy campaign.

The allocation of one million pounds per annum, for one year in the first instance and subsequently extended to three years for the development of Adult Literacy as a consequence of Christopher Price's Bill of 1974 is another significant event. This is particularly significant because it led to the establishment of the Adult Literacy Resource Agency (henceforth ALRA), which was charged with the distribution and monitoring of the allocated funds. Though the allocated fund was limited and the projection for ALRA was itself short-term and interim in nature (Fowler 2005, Hamilton and Hillier 2006), this was the first time a quasi-governmental agency had been given a supervisory role in the context of literacy development. More importantly, ALRA and its successors, Adult Literacy Unit (henceforth ALU), Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (henceforth ALBSU) and Basic Skills Agency (henceforth BSA), signified the introduction of monitoring and quality control in adult literacy. As Hamilton (1996: 152) observes, 'it [ALRA] began as a resource agency, but became more of a monitoring and quality control body'. The above perception of these organisations does not necessarily erase other roles and contributions they made in the process. For instance, some practitioners at the time saw ALU as a very strong practitioner-biased organisation, while others acknowledged the contributions of its inheritors in terms of providing resources and training. Nevertheless, the element of quality control began to emerge particularly with the changing remit of succeeding organisations.

The establishment of the Manpower Service Commission in 1973 (henceforth MSC), with its remit to provide for and fund youth training schemes, as well as to fund work-related initiatives in schools, further education and higher education, is another significant event (see Ainley and Corney 1990). The MSC introduced the first remedial literacy course for employment skills and the funding of full-time adult literacy and numeracy courses for candidates who were deemed unequipped to pass its TOPS courses, or unable to hold their jobs due to problems with literacy and numeracy (Fowler 2005). It was therefore responsible for the introduction of testing and employability skills, and by implication, the attendant concepts of selection and monitoring. Overall, literacy developments involving the MSC signalled the extension of literacy provision to include a framework of providing literacy to meet the needs of people excluded from the economy by their perceived lack of skills.

4.3. Influential themes and the social realities informing adult literacy policy and practice in the 1970s

While the history above briefly identifies and discusses events that impacted on literacy practice and policy, it does not on its own elaborate the socio-cognitive themes that informed these events. What follows therefore is an attempt to tease out the socio-cognitive themes underlying these events, and the preceding social realities that generated them. Although some interpretations given about both responses from interviewees and documents are based on inferences, and might therefore be considered subjective, all the

conclusions arrived at are supported, in addition, by documentary evidence and interview data.

4.3.1. The themes of social responsibility and entitlement

Dominant in the evolution of adult literacy policy and practice in the 1970s were the interrelated themes of social responsibility and entitlement which were given a radical interpretation in the 60s and 70s. McKenzie (2001:215) notes there were 'Escalating public fears about the behaviours of certain groups of people, including teachers, young people and black youth in particular'. The response of the state to these events can be related to two different but related strands of socio-cognitive themes, which influenced the evolution of adult literacy policy and practice. While on the one hand, the government probably saw radicalism as some form of irresponsibility, others within society saw it from the viewpoint of the disadvantaged group and a question of entitlement.

Typical of those who held the entitlement and disadvantaged group viewpoint were the BAS, which saw a convergence with its own ethos of self-help, and the BBC, which had individuals championing the cause. Between them, they brought the twin socio-cognitive themes of social responsibility and entitlement to bear on the development of adult literacy policy and practice. While the theme of entitlement argues that members of the disadvantaged group have a right to education and must not therefore be deprived, the theme of social responsibility focuses on the roles which non-disadvantaged members of the society needed to play in order to help those who are

disadvantaged. Noting the role of the BAS in this respect, one interviewee involved at the time in subject group two describes it as:

` a kind of missionary group, weren't they, I mean----- this idea that the universities should have some kind of connection with their communities, and they should be going out and doing good things...' (Resp. 028).

This notion of 'doing good' encapsulates the essence of the theme of catering for the disadvantaged and resonates with other interviewees who provided responses such as: 'an entitlement to, you know, a second chance as it was known' (Resp 028), and 'making more and more opportunities available for people to pursue what they wanted to pursue, without having to pay for it, because it was an entitlement' (Resp. 027). The BAS was particularly committed to the literacy agenda on the basis of its views on social responsibility. As an extract from the meeting notes of BAS dated 31st January 1973 reveals:

` it was generally agreed that having proved there is a problem and accepted that we have a responsibility to meet it...' (minutes of BAS meeting of 31st January 1973:1).

The significance of the themes of social responsibility and entitlement was further emphasised by the BAS in one of its publications when it asserted that:

`literacy is a basic right to which everyone is entitled. This may be a somewhat well-worn phrase but in fact the concept behind it is fundamental to the purpose and approach of the British Association of Settlements Literacy campaign' (Status: Illiterate Prospect: Zero, Policy pointer 1973:1).

Similar sentiments were expressed in BAS (1974), though from the viewpoint of 'civic right necessary for a fulfilled life within society'. In their official bulletin, BAS (1974:2) declared that:

'We believe that the power for social action depends on the ability to handle communications. In order to participate, to exercise certain rights, to choose between alternatives and to solve problems, people need certain basic skills: listening, talking, reading and writing'.

The importance of the theme of social responsibility in the evolution of adult literacy policy and practice in the 1970s is further evidenced by an excerpt from the Newsletter of ALRA, which avers that:

'The Adult Literacy campaign is, therefore, the public expression of an Education Service's uneasy conscience and the additional provision made as a result of its genuine attempt to remedy the situation' (ALRA Vol. 9 1977:2).

Other individuals buttress the argument that the notion of social responsibility on the part of the government might be a significant factor. David Hargreaves, who was the producer of literacy programmes at the BBC, in an interview with Hamilton and Hillier (Interview manuscript: Archive material 1:18) concluded that the reason for the sudden provision of £1,000,000 by the government to fund adult literacy was because, 'they were shamed into it, really, they were shamed into it'. This echoes Morehouse (1983:145), who sees the BAS's activities as 'claims in terms of functional literacy as a basic human right' (p.145). The role of the BAS was therefore a form of advocacy in the drive towards helping the deprived get their entitlement.

The BBC's role was essentially that of advocacy. Within this framework of advocacy therefore, it was possible for individuals to pursue different agendas, which reflected the significance of the social responsibility and entitlement factors. Evidence in support of this perception originates mainly from interviewees and archival records; although they generally recognise that

it was more driven by individuals than organisational ethos in the case of the BBC. One interviewee, confirming the dominant role of individuals within the BBC observes that:

` No it wasn't, and I wouldn't say that it was the BBC as an organisation that was really behind it. ... And literally it was this man, it was David Hargreaves, who has written a book, a very good book, documenting in a lot of detail what happened at the BBC and what the Campaign was about from their end ` (Resp. 028).

Other descriptors like `public duty`, `behalfist` and `right` all seem to refer to the themes of entitlement from the viewpoint of advocates. An interviewee who introduced the notion of public duty opined that: `it was the BBC interpreting its public duty charter and wanting to take that forward. ----` (Resp. DM200026). Another interviewee suggested that entitlement manifested itself in the consciousness of some of the activists in the form of representation notes:

` but there's also another term I found actually is quite helpful, as a critical term to review it with, is to say it was on behalf 'ist work. There was a lot of, to start with, campaigning on behalf of a population` (Resp. DM 200031).

A third interviewee talks of `what should be rightfully available to the general public` (Resp. Dm 200021). All of the above confirm the advocacy role of the BBC.

In an interview with the Changing Faces of Adult Literacy team, David Hargreaves shed some light on the factors that informed his role in the context of the BBC's literacy programmes and resources. Hargreaves talks of what is right, and therefore should be done, but in the context of individual contributions. He recalled that in the wake of shaping the agenda for the

involvement of the BBC, its education officers `presented an argument that..... we ought to be contributing in some way to helping people who had difficulties with reading and writing.....` (Hargreaves interview: 6). Commenting further, Hargreaves notes the affiliation of BBC's education officers to the ethos of the BAS, observing that their perception

`was informed by the fact that they, amongst their travel and meetings of the kind that I was telling you about, they had certainly begun to get to know the people from the British Association of Settlements who were building up a head of steam and a very powerful case for something urgently being done.....` (Hargreaves interview document :6).

In essence, therefore, the social reality that informed the social themes and cognition that contributed to the evolution of policy and practice by some of the most active participants through the BBC was the same as that reflected in the involvement of the BAS as discussed earlier.

Hargreaves again alludes to the notion of social responsibility when he argues that the allocation of £1,000,000 to literacy development was effected by gaining a `consensus among the receiving agencies on the ground that this was a socially responsible thing to do`. As he noted, this notion of social responsibility began to become all-pervading by 1975. In Hargreaves' words,

`But everywhere, the sense was sinking in..... I mean there is a national consensus from 120 agencies we should do it...` (Hargreaves interview document: 14).

The inference from this contribution is that the first financial commitment towards the development of adult literacy, and in effect a kind of policy, was achieved through a process of shaming the powers that be into recognising their social responsibility. Hargreaves suggests that it was

'the threat of this very large piece of broadcasting, that provokes..... the government for the first time to free up a large chunk of money and to create a mechanism for the distribution of it' (Hargreaves interview document: 14).

The vital link between this revelation in terms of the initial government participation and the notion of social responsibility is in this case an indirect one. There are two propositions here: first, the BBC's role was informed by the ethos of social responsibility and second, the BBC was significantly responsible for getting the government to participate in the campaign by providing some money. The link between these two propositions, therefore, provides an indirect link between the government and the notion of social responsibility. While there is very little evidence of the actual impact on government, the response of Chris Price, a junior minister of education, through his Bill, and the allocation of money for literacy development can be seen as an indication that the campaign actually had an impact. Hargreaves confirms this when he notes that:

' the direct result of that was that Chris Price, who was a junior minister in the department of education or whatever it was then called... switched £1million away from... ' (Hargreaves interview document:14).

Whichever way we look at it therefore, there is some evidence that the BBC, through its response to the call of social responsibility, induced the government and its agencies to contribute to the process of literacy policy development.

The contribution of the BBC was however not totally the product of the agenda of individuals. In his opening speech at the evaluation of 'The BBC's contribution to adult education', Michael Checkland, the Director General of

the BBC (archive material #2), averred that the BBC's involvement was informed by the fact that 'The BBC is committed to responding to the educational needs of the public, from school to adulthood'. In one of its reports, a BBC research group gave a similar indication by claiming that, 'The campaign itself emerged from the deep concern for the educationally disadvantaged expressed in the Russell report' (Archive material #3). It can therefore be argued that although the notions of social responsibility, entitlement and the disadvantaged were introduced by individuals, it converged with the values of their employer, the BBC, which to some extent held similar value positions as did some contemporary government ministers. In this context, Christopher Price is particularly important, as he was identified as the Minister who allocated the first sizeable amount of money for the implementation of the literacy campaign in the 70s. He diverted funds from other areas into the funding of the literacy campaign. Acknowledging the importance of the fund provided by Price, Hargreaves observes that;

'The monies are all allocated and tied up, so the only way of getting new money was to take it away from somewhere else. So ... Chris Price took the £1 million out of one of the budget lines for higher education and made it available for emergency distribution to the face-to-face agencies and he set up as a mechanism for as it were, dealing with claims on that money, a new thing called Adult Literacy Resource Agency' (Hargreaves interview material:14).

There have been a number of suggestions as to why Price took the step he did. Predominantly, it has been insinuated that his hands were probably forced by those he reported to, who had been 'shamed' into recognising the need to fund literacy at the time. One respondent, for instance, declared that, 'I don't think he knew why or that he gave a thought to it. I think he was just

instructed` (Resp. 011). A different insight was however provided by another respondent who suggests that:

`when Christopher Price, ... gets interested, part of the reason he got interested was because his wife was a volunteer literacy tutor` (Resp. 031). (Note: The specific reference to individuals here will be deleted before this work gets into the public domain)

Another view suggests that the involvement of Christopher Price was as a result of lobbying from organisations and movements such as BAS, the Right to Read Campaign, the BBC and NIACE. In a post-viva discussion, (Tuckett 2008: Post-viva discussion) reported a discussion with Alan Stock, erstwhile Director of NIACE, in which the latter narrated the role himself and Mr. Grattan, the then BBC Education officer played in persuading Christopher Price to find the money that was allocated to adult literacy. Furthermore, he suggested that Christopher Price was able to divert the fund from other approved sources because the idea fitted with the post-Russell commitment of the newly-re-elected labour government. Whichever of these views is correct, it is difficult to deny the fact he as an individual was sympathetic to all, some, or at least one of these causes and as a result, he found the money.

Also illustrating the link between individuals and their perception of responsibility and entitlement is the contribution of Peter Clyne, who was the research assistant to the Russell Committee and a one-time Assistant Education officer for adult education in ILEA. One respondent surmised his intervention along with those of other individuals as follows:

`..... And when Peter Clyne publishes the "Disadvantaged Adult" and he was then the leader of the Inner London Education Authority, it was an important, whatever, piece of policy writing based on his own research` (Resp. 024).

Deriving from this statement is the view that Peter Clyne's contribution was informed by his personal views, though based on research, of the then existing social reality. But putting the role of people like Peter Clyne into a clearer perspective is another respondent who draws a direct link between his contributions and the Russell Report which was released earlier. According to this respondent, it was the notion of the disadvantaged adult, introduced by Clyne, which served as a direct link between the Russell Report and the adult literacy campaign and policy development. This position is encapsulated in the response below:

'But what the Russell Report did was to put on the agenda the importance of adult education for what was then called disadvantaged adults. And the man responsible for that was really the researcher for the Russell committee, who was a man called Peter Clyne' (Resp. 028).

The above makes two things clear in our analysis of the evolution of literacy development at this stage. Firstly is the route through which individuals like Peter Clyne were able to contribute to the development of policy. Secondly, in this particular case, we are provided a glimpse of the driving force, the social reality, which conditions the views of Peter Clyne: the disadvantaged adult. From this standpoint, therefore, it is logical to associate contributors such as Peter Clyne with the notions of social responsibility and entitlement, even if he used a different term.

4.3.2. Economic and Employment Themes in the Evolution of Literacy Policy and Practice in the 70s

The factors of employment and the economy were significant in shaping the direction of policy on literacy in the 1970s. There was a growing concern

about the rate of unemployment which was inevitably linked to economic issues. As recorded by a number of scholars (e.g. Habermas 1975), unemployment was itself a direct result of the global economic problem that confronted many industrialised nations in the mid-70s. McKenzie (2001:215) notes that 'the worsening national and global economic crisis had a profound effect on attitudes during the 1970s'. Like Habermas (1975) she considers that 'governments seemed to be facing a legitimisation crisis'. The government's response to the general problem of economic recession and to unemployment in particular, was reflected in the notion of the welfare state being overburdened. As noted by Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) and Hargreaves (1994) respectively, education was treated as 'the wastebasket of society' and a 'policy receptacle into which society's unsolved and unsolvable problems are unceremoniously deposited'. While there might have been a shift in government perception that was informed by the changes in leadership from Heath through Wilson to Callaghan, it would seem that such changes were not noticeable in the context of adult literacy policy.

Allen and Ainley (2007) perceive the response of the government as a derivative of the previously trendy 'human capital theory' approach to education noting that:

'Although education and training continued to be organised in different ways in different countries, there was general agreement across Western governments that education should be seen as a form of economic investment' (p15).

The focus therefore was to design a new construct of education as a panacea for the economic ailments of the society. This focus was embraced by the fledgling adult literacy field through the introduction of economic

considerations and initiation of a regime that heralded the 'value for money' approach to education. Thus, the government confronted the issue of unemployment from the viewpoint of educational inadequacies and effectively transferred this into the process of policy development.

McKenzie (2001:6) provides a further insight into this response when she observes that:

'Education provided a neat and simplistic focus for otherwise disparate and complex discontents. Social trends such as mass unemployment, aging populations and changes to the traditional family meant that governments were also becoming overburdened by their responsibilities for social welfare'.

This then was a precursor to the viewpoint, which took hold in the 1980s that those who were described as 'illiterate' were responsible to a large extent for the economic problems of society. While this might not have been a widely held view at the time, a related position that, 'illiterate', unskilled and uneducated people were to blame for their own situations was more widely held. It follows logically, therefore, that the government's position was to view the issue of unemployment from the perspective of skills development. Failure in education and training was therefore seen as in some way, failing the nation (Ball 1990).

Encapsulating this perception in 1976 is the Ruskin speech from the then-Prime Minister, James Callaghan in which he declared that: 'I am concerned on my journeys to find complaints from industry that new recruits from schools sometimes do not have the basic tools to do the job that is required' (Cited from McKenzie 2001:215). The focus of this speech was on how to meet the

needs and the demands of industry and not those of the members of society. Put another way, the perception was that the way to meet individual needs was to meet the needs of the economy. While the government's response was to see the 'unskilled and illiterate' as constituting a significant part of the cause of the economic and unemployment crisis, others, particularly voluntary organisations and practitioners, preferred to see it as an indication of the failure of society to prepare adequately 'the disadvantaged' to cope with the dire situation. They therefore approached this crisis from the viewpoint of empowering them.

However, both sides of the divide embraced the notion of literacy as a tool for upgrading skills in order to improve the state of employability. On the part of the government, the MSC played a very significant role in factoring the economic and unemployment arguments into the development of policy and practice in the field of adult literacy. Although a rather contentious claim that, the practitioners' body, ALRA contributed to this process is sometimes made (Fowler 2005), a more realistic perception is that which recognises that although ALRA's focus was literacy practice, such a focus sometimes involved helping people into and sustaining their existing employment.

In the case of the non-governmental actors, however, the introduction of the themes of unemployment and economic stringency was embodied in voluntary organisations like the BAS and many practitioners who in some cases were unwillingly seduced into this viewpoint by the constraints of funding. Although this might not seem too obvious, by 1973, there is evidence

that the position of BAS already included the perception of literacy as a means towards an employment. In a letter written to the then Secretary of State for Education, Margaret Thatcher, the BAS, through its development officer, Geoffrey Clarkson, declared that their conference of March 1973 was for 'a target audience from the industry and commerce having regard to the special relationship between illiteracy and unskilled jobs' (Archive document #5). This contrasts with the ostensible perceptions of the goals of the literacy campaign as declared in their charter, which states that:

'Literacy is a right to which everyone is entitled.----- the concept behind it is fundamental to the purpose and approach of the British Association of Settlements Literacy Campaign' (BAS 1974:2).

But far more significant is the role of governmental agencies in factoring the themes of employment and economic well-being into the equation of adult literacy policy and practice development. As recorded by a number of authors, as time went on, the MSC became increasingly influential in educational policy development and implementation (See Ainley and Corney 1990, Field, 1996, Hamilton and Hillier, 2006 and Allen and Ainley, 2007). This ascendancy of the MSC reflected significantly on the evolution of policy and practice in literacy through the introduction of pre-TOPS literacy courses, the direct linkage between literacy and employment skills, and the process of measuring input against output in educational literacy provision.

The most influential actors in this respect was ALRA's inheritors which later assumed to some extent, the status of the official monitoring organ of adult literacy policy and practice, ALU in 1978 and ALBSU by 1980. However,

there is some evidence that the thinking within ALRA, even at these early times, was already becoming slanted towards this direction. Opinions and positions expressed in several of ALRA's publications confirm the view that the agency was beginning to recognise the significance of the economic / employment factors. Opinions expressed in its Newsletters such as: 'Literacy is the way in to a world of new opportunities both in employment and in family life', 'Literacy is an essential tool of vocational education and training' ((ALRA 1976, vol. 8:4)) and, 'The importance and value in forging strong, though sensitive links between the adult literacy service and the industry cannot be over-emphasised' (ALRA issue 9, 1977:4) all confirm this slant towards the employment argument.

As we shall highlight later in chapter 5, this theme became more dominant during the days of ALBSU, which was morphed from the existing ALRA and ALU. In a number of reflective declarations at the beginning of the 80s, ALBSU newsletters provide evidence of the existing and continuing commitment to the theme of employability through literacy. For example, in its September/October 1980 issue, ALBSU accepts that the unit's remit is:

'provision designed to improve the standard of proficiency for adults whose first or second language is English, in the areas of literacy and numeracy and those related communication skills without which people are impeded from applying or being considered for employment may seem confusing for those used to seemingly simple adult literacy remits' (ALBSU 1980, no 3:1)

Furthermore, in the same publication, ALBSU highlights a range of collaborative activities with the MSC on its TOPS and YOPS courses, all focusing on the theme of employability and improving the economy. It concludes by declaring that:

'undoubtedly, a substantial programme of educational and training opportunities is urgently needed on a scale commensurate with the present level of unemployment' (ibid).

As a result, by the end of the 1970s, the themes of unemployment and economic stringency assumed very significant roles in the shaping of adult literacy policy and practice. These themes were driven by organisations such as MSC and ALRA and its inheritors. One interviewee puts this in perspective when she sums up the transition from the 70s to the 80s as follows:

'Earlier in the 70s, the language was still about disadvantage and not yet about skills and levels quite so explicitly as it became later in the 70s and the 80s I think. But I suspect that one strand of the later 70s and the 80s would have been much more focused on employability and employment and the Manpower Services Commission getting involved, and the Department of Education getting involved' (Resp. 031:6).

The introduction of the themes of economy and unemployment in the context of adult literacy policy and practice was reflected in the introduction of the concept of skill and its attendant feature of standards, though the preferred term at the time was 'competence' rather than 'skills'. Tracing the emergence of standards in the curriculum delivered in schools to the 1970s, Torrance (2002:19) cites the DES response to Callaghan's speech as signalling the introduction of curriculum standards. In response to Callaghan's speech, a government consultative document argued that:

'the time has come to try to establish generally accepted principles for the composition of the.... Curriculum for all pupils...there is a need to investigate the part which might be played by a 'protected' or 'core' element of the curriculum common to all schools' (DES 1977:11).

In the case of adult literacy, the identification and 'protection' of 'core' elements fell squarely in the lap of ALRA, its inheritors and the MSC, the latter

of who was able to use the financial resources they controlled as inducement for adult literacy providers.

The focus on skills brought on by the themes of unemployment and the economy impacted most directly on the curriculum. In this respect, demands were made that curricula in schools and colleges should be designed in a way that allowed them to train a sizable percentage of the now unemployed workforce. As noted by Allen and Ainley (2007:19), employers `demanded government replace the emphasis given by educationalists to a free thinking “liberalist curriculum” with one which for many students was to become directly related to the world of work`. These demands were acceded to by compliant governmental agencies like ALRA. Allen and Ainley (ibid) go further to identify the role of centrally funded government agencies such as the MSC, which `bypassed democratically elected local authorities to enrol school leavers on Youth Training schemes while funding work-related initiatives`. The impact of this pattern of response on the field of adult literacy was the introduction of work-related competencies in literacy, which was manifested in skills-based testing. Literacy learners were conscripted into a learning culture, which no longer addressed their needs but the perceived economic needs of society. As some would argue, this served as the foundation for what was to later become allegedly a process of substituting education for economic policy (Allen & Ainley 2007).

Having said this, it is important that we note the reality on the ground at the time. Many commentators (Hamilton and Hillier 2006, Tuckett 2008: post viva

discussion), pointed out the fact that the drive towards implementing a skill-driven model of literacy could have been informed also by the strong statistical link between literacy learners and unemployment. In a way, this could be seen as a reality-informed factor that contributed to the shaping of policy. This of course again throws up the debate on what constitutes literacy. While the link between literacy and unemployment could be faulted by adherents of the New Literacy paradigm, for instance, others would argue that the perception of this link was informed by reality. Nevertheless, the crucial point here is that unemployment, at this time, assumed a significant level of influence in the shaping of adult literacy policy.

4.4.3. Other themes

Although the themes discussed above were by far the more influential ones in the evolution of literacy policy and practice, significant reference is made by interviewees to the important role played by the persistent radicalism that still permeated society in the 70s and 80s. In adult literacy policy and practice development, this element of radicalism was embodied predominantly in the many volunteers who were practitioners. Fowler (2005) describes a pattern of 'widespread political activity based around the issues of gender, class and race' (p100) and argues that for many of the then volunteers, 'their wider political beliefs' were 'intrinsic to their involvement in adult education' (ibid). 'In a way, a lot of people involved were quite radically motivated ...' (Resp. 028:1), and 'a kind of atmosphere at the time which was around social justice movements, a commitment in a kind of neo-liberal way, to making sure that people had their right to education' (Resp. 027). Such responses confirm the

significance of the element of radicalism from the perception of this subject group.

However, this element of radicalism did not manifest itself as an independent socio-cognitive theme. Rather it was manifested in the form of the prevalent themes of social responsibility and entitlement. For many volunteers, different nomenclatures were employed. One interviewee sees it as 'introducing the notion of social inclusion' and the terrain of adult literacy as an 'area of social responsibility' which was 'interesting, exciting and it was a sort of live area' (Resp. 026).

4.4. Alignment of Literacy Policy and Practice in the 1970s to Theoretical Paradigms

As suggested in Chapter Two, policy and practice in the field of literacy are usually aligned to different theoretical paradigms. While it is true that this pattern of alignment is frequently not explicitly expressed, it is usually possible to identify the implicit association between the two. In the context of literacy practice and policy in the 70s, elements of policy and practice appear to have been associated with different perceptions of literacy identified earlier in Chapter Two. What is even more interesting is the unpredictable nature of the relationship between policy and practice and paradigms as illustrated below. In some cases for instance, policy actors, considering the socio-cognitive themes they bring to bear on policy and practice, have been found to align in practice with paradigms that are totally antithetical to their natural theoretical inclinations. For example, avowed social literacy converts have been known

to contribute to the development of literacy policy steeped in the principles of cognitive perception of literacy. In effect therefore, the notion of movement of transition amongst and between paradigms appears to have been reinforced in the structure of relationship between policy, practice and paradigmatic allegiances as illustrated below.

4.4.1. Alignment with traditional/ cognitive paradigm of literacy

The traditional/cognitive paradigm perception of literacy is encapsulated in the theoretical postulations of scholars such as Havelock (1963), Goody and Watt (1963) and Hildyard and Olson (1978), as discussed in Chapter Two. An indication of alignment of policy and practice in adult literacy to this paradigm of literacy is most evident in the contribution of volunteers. This alignment is itself an embodiment of the paradox identified by Street (1984) and Herrington (2004), which we have discussed in Chapter Two. Considering that one of the driving socio-cognitive themes behind the contributions of volunteers at this time was their association with social and political radicalism, it is natural to assume that they would in theory and practice associate with a paradigm of critical literacy as espoused by Freire (1974) and his South American colleagues at the time. In reality however, the pattern of their allegiance appears to be counter intuitive.

In my view however, while many of these volunteers embraced the concepts presented in critical literacy theoretically, the reality is that their practice subscribed to the tenets of the traditional/cognitive paradigm of literacy. Many of the works in the literature take a different view on this. For instance, Fowler

(2005) and Hillier and Hamilton (2006) imply that the practice of volunteers was largely informed by the radicalism of Freire. The irony identified by Street (1984) and Herrington (2004) in terms of conflicting paradigmatic allegiances, and which I see as the movement of transition between and among paradigms, appears to manifest itself in the practice of volunteers for the reasons presented below.

For many volunteers, the focus of literacy was writing. As noted by Mace (1992:11) 'between 1975 and the late 1980s much literacy work in this country was focused on the job of persuading students to write'. This focus on writing echoes the importance placed on writing as the marker of literacy and civilisation by the likes of Goody (1977) and Hildyard and Olson (1988) (See discussions in Chapter Two). While from the view point of topics chosen by students to write about, it could be argued that volunteers subscribed to Freire's concept of emancipatory literacy, the importance placed on the development of writing skills and the perception of such development as the ultimate indication of literacy skills, suggests an affinity with what Freire describes as the 'banking theory of education'. Herein lies the paradox in terms of paradigmatic allegiances of volunteers in the 1970s and a reflection of the framework of pragmatic realism through which they worked.

Alignment to the traditional/cognitive paradigm was also reflected in the involvement of the MSC. In this case, the manifestation was in both policy and practice. From the viewpoint that the underpinning value of the MSC's involvement was literacy development towards employability skills, there is an

indication that the involvement of the MSC was informed by a perception of literacy as a cognitive set of skills lacking in those who demonstrate problems with it. It also introduces financial computation and the attendant argument about economic value, thus confirming the claim that governmental agencies tend to associate more with the traditional/cognitive paradigm of literacy because it provides the framework for justifying the funds expended on literacy provision and development (Street 1984).

Another strand of existing argument that is echoed in the alignment of the MSC to the traditional/cognitive paradigm is the debate on the emerging work order that was espoused in Holland with Frank and Cooke (1998) and Gee (1998a) who argue that literacy was being reframed both in content and structure to enable it to meet the requirements of a new work order. Most significant in this respect is the development of the pre-TOPS courses for literacy students. The essence of these courses was to develop a particular level of skills in these trainees, such that they would eventually be able to train on full-employment focused courses. This also echoes Freire's (1970) banking theory of education. Literacy policy and practice development in the 1970s therefore had an alignment to the traditional/cognitive paradigm of literacy but within that alignment, there was a state of flux with movement between theory and practice that frequently produced paradoxes.

4.4.2. Alignment to New Literacy Studies

There is very little evidence that there was any serious policy awareness of the principles embodied in the framework of literacy proposed by the

adherents of New Literacy. This is not surprising as the concept of New Literacy can be considered a 'latter day' development. The notion of literacy as a social practice was something that at this point was not consciously engaged with by either practitioners or policy makers. However, ALRA in fact subscribed consciously or unconsciously to some elements of the principles of New Literacies, particularly the argument that there are many literacies and that literacy is a social practice. One of the pre-occupations of ALRA was the development of work-specific literacies. In ALRA (1976:4), this accidental or conscious alignment to the ethos of New Literacies was emphasised with the declaration that:

'Literacy is an essential tool of vocational education and training and allocations of money for training could, we believe, validly be used to extend the provision for adult literacy in vocational context'.

While this echoes in part the traditional perception of literacy, it also recognises one of the main tenets of New Literacies, which perceives literacy as a social practice situated in different social spheres (Barton and Hamilton 2000). In this respect, the world of work is seen as the main social sphere for which literacy needed to be developed and utilised. Viewing this from a different perspective, it can be argued that this shift is merely indicative of 'a search for a place in better funded pastures' (Tuckett:2008: post-viva discussion). Nevertheless, this shift demonstrated the fact that elements of what is now generally referred to as New Literacies were embraced by some practitioners and organisations like ALRA.

The link drawn in the preceding argument between New Literacies and the practice of literacy in the 70s underscores the inherent paradox that is often

encountered in analysing the dichotomy between policy and practice. In this particular instance, the paradox highlights the divergence between the policy slant as against implementation and yields what might be seen as conflicting paradigmatic allegiances between policy and practice. This again highlights what was referred to in Chapter Two as movements of transition between and among paradigms.

Finally, there is evidence that some providers and practitioners aligned to the principles of critical literacy. In particular, Freire's emancipatory model of literacy (1970) appears to have been the driving force behind the practice of many centres and practitioners. In many cases, these providers and practitioners manoeuvred in spite of increasingly difficult conditions and used a combination of creativity and adaptation to continue to promote their preferred model of literacy. Typifying providers in this class are: Brighton Friends' Centre who used the publication of *Write First Time* to empower their learners (Tuckett 2001) and Gatehouse that utilised a similar principle. What was most important about these organisations at the time was that they provided the opportunity for many practitioners to keep their perspectives.

4.5. Summary

This chapter has presented events which served as the social reality from which socio-cognitive themes that were influential in the evolution of literacy policy and practice in the 1970s emanated. Have these realities and themes endured through the 1980s and 1990s? Have they indeed continued to play a

significant role in contemporary policy and practice in the field of adult literacy? Answers to these questions will be provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The 1980s and the years leading to the Moser Report

5.1 Introduction

Fowler (2005) cites the views of two different respondents on the direction of literacy policy and practice in the 1980s. One respondent, a practitioner, reminisced 'things got really good by the early 1980s', and the other, a civil servant, declared: 'I think the movement lost steam... about 1978 when the government lost interest...' (p.114). This divergence could be seen to reflect a lack of formalised direction of both policy and practice. Nevertheless, there were undoubtedly a number of significant events that had bearings on the evolution of literacy policy and practice, which, though not specifically centred on literacy, generated socio-cognitive themes with far-reaching implications for the evolution of literacy policy and practice. While looking at the development of adult literacy policy and practice, some studies have covered a wide range of events including those that were only remotely linked to adult literacy. (see e.g. Hickey 2008, Hamilton and Hillier 2006). However, this section focuses only on those events that are either directly linked to, or have direct repercussions for adult literacy practice and policy development in a specific period.

5.2. The Metamorphosis of ALRA into ALBSU

The metamorphosis of ALRA into ALBSU was not in itself a significant event. What was significant was the changed nature of the mandate given to ALBSU from a resource agent to an official voice, holding a brief in proxy for the government (Fieldhouse 1996, Fowler 2005, Hamilton and Hillier 2006, Hickey 2008). Garnett (1988:2) highlights the changing role of ALBSU from

being an advocate for the needy, into an organ of advocacy for government which 'linked funding more tightly to the new government's narrowly functional ideas of the value of education'. He concludes: 'What has clearly happened has been that government has contained the literacy campaign, domesticated it, and fitted it in a stable check to a substantially unchanged system'(p9). What ALBSU appeared to have been forced to do was to become a minder of the domesticated campaign.

The evolution in role had a great impact on the process of policy and practice development in the field of adult literacy. First, as an official voice, ALBSU introduced the notion of standardisation through its regional training programmes thus marking the end of the flexibility and the freedom to improvise that was one of the hallmarks of the adult literacy practice in the 1970s. One fall-out of this process of standardisation was that those who really needed help appeared to have been marginalised because the nature of the help they required did not fit the structure of the type funded by the supervisory organs, thus limiting beneficiaries. According to Garnett (1989:9), the NCD Survey 'highlighted the scale of the problem -- 9 in 10 of the men and 19 in 20 of the women with literacy problems had not had help in a literacy scheme by 1983'. However, it is important note that the establishment of regional training also contributed to the process of sharing good practice, as it provided opportunities for practitioners to share and learn from their varying experiences. In spite of this, however, it would seem that the more enduring mark left in the minds of many of the participants

interviewed is the role the establishment of regional training programmes in introducing the notion of standardisation.

Closely related to the above is the gradual marginalisation of the voluntary sector which played such a significant role in the development of literacy policy and practice in the 1970s. As the official voice of the government, ALBSU was forced to adapt its professional outlook and to pander to the desires of the incumbent government, who after all, had control of the purse strings. As noted by Hamilton and Hillier (2006:12), 'ALBSU paid careful attention to public relations with the government, through editorials in its newsletters and by taking opportunities for short-term funding of new projects'. In effect, ALBSU, regardless of its intentions, became something of 'his master's voice'.

The changing role of ALBSU brought two elements with it. First, because it 'was not a consultative regime' (Hamilton and Hillier 2006:12), it signified the gradual elimination of teachers and practitioners from the process of policy development, as this now squarely rested on the shoulders of ALBSU as a quasi-government agency. This eroded the professional contributions of practitioners and has since become institutionalised in the field of adult literacy.

The second significance of the changed role of ALBSU was the fact that it heralded the era of structured funding with its attendant target setting. While it is true that ALBSU had limited funds and therefore could not really be seen as

controlling budgets for adult literacy, it would seem that its endorsement, advice and training went a long way in securing funding from LEAs who were effectively controlling funding at the time. In effect, practitioners and providers in the field of adult literacy were forced to adapt to the changing institutional and funding context within which they were compelled to operate (Hamilton and Hillier 2006). The new role of ALBSU as agent of the government, which is thus effectively controlled by the government was particularly significant because it prepared the ground for the government to drive through its agenda of finding solutions to the problem of a seemingly ever-increasing number of unemployed adults (Hamilton and Hillier 2006). The assumption was that education in general, and literacy in particular, could be used as a remedy for this social ailment. Thus, the notion of literacy as a panacea for poor vocational development and employability began to assume prominence.

With this social reality informing its contribution to the process of policy and practice development in adult literacy, ALBSU inevitably brought with it the theme of standardisation, which emanates from the need to control through funding, and the themes of employment and vocationalism, which appear to be the ultimate socio-cognitive driver. As observed by Fieldhouse (1996:131):

... a very different policy rationale was in ascendance: that of economic efficiency, rather than the right to read... public discussions about literacy increasingly invoked the vocational discourse of human resource investment`.

This shift was signified by various terms like `literacy skills` in place of practice (Fieldhouse 1996, Fowler 2006), `new vocationalism`, which advocated the replacement of `irrelevant academic education` with `behaviourally-defined and work-related competencies` (Allen and Ainley 2007: 43), and the

preference for the term 'training' in place of 'education'. This appears to draw from the overall government perspective on literacy as a remedy rather than a symptom. Helping to implement this was ALBSU among others, although there is no evidence that this alignment of literacy to skills was ALBSU's preferred way of doing it.

One respondent confirms this perception of the influence brought to bear on the direction of policy and practice development by vocationalism and employment, concluding that:

'In the 1970s, the language was still about disadvantage and not yet about skills and levels quite so explicitly as it became in the 80s I think. One strand of the 80s was without a doubt focused on employability and unemployment'. (Resp.031:6)

Another respondent, while looking at the funding requirements that were administered by ALBSU and other agencies like the MSC, had this to say:

'Yeah, to access this fund, you know, the policy was kind of consciously shaped in that way, kind of say, well this is going to cater for employment, rather than just see this as people's entitlement' (Resp. 028:4).

On the changing role of ALBSU, the same respondent noted:

' I think at the beginning they were more a support agency, and they were seen as a resource ... I think as we went into the 1980s, that role changed and they were under a lot of pressure to become more of a quality monitoring agency'

What the above suggest is that the altered mandate of ALRA, more than the change of its name to ALBSU, played a very significant role in the evolution of policy in the 1980s. The effect was that the literacy campaign was stifled to some extent, while at the same time, its form of delivery became more prescriptive, reflecting a top-down structure in place of the bottom-up structure

of the early 1970s, maybe not directly in funding but in policy debate which inevitably contributed to funding decisions..

5.3. ALBSU's ESOL Remit 1984

The addition of English for Speakers of Other Languages (henceforth ESOL) to the remit of ALBSU in 1984 ultimately assumed a highly significant dimension. While local authorities had the ultimate control of the administration and development of ESOL before 1984, the control of ESOL provision was placed under the remit of ALBSU from then onwards, although some have described this as merely 'a brief to support developments' (Tuckett 2008 : post-viva discussion). What is important, however, is that prior to this, there was limited collaboration between the two sets of practitioners in terms of teaching methodology, resource development and practice of teaching in the two fields. Putting ESOL under the remit of ALBSU became significant therefore in the context of practice because many practitioners were now managed under the same structure. It became inevitable that practice was shared by the practitioners. One area of literacy policy and practice in which this interaction was manifested was in the development of curriculum content. As noted by one interviewee, who was a practitioner at the time, 'because of this interaction, aspects of the ESOL curriculum, like speaking and listening, began to creep into the literacy curriculum' (Interview respondent DM 200015).

ESOL practitioners have argued that their provision is distinctly different from literacy (Hamilton and Hillier 2006). Central to this perception of difference is

the argument that there is an element of political awareness in the field of ESOL which 'was often demonstrated by the negotiated lessons arising from particular incidents' and which crystallised into a student-centred approach to teaching (ibid: 113). With the merger of the two fields under the auspices of ALBSU, this perception began to creep into the practice of literacy teaching. As noted by Hamilton and Hillier (ibid), 'being student-centred had become an almost unchallengeable approach'... and 'Wherever learners participated in improving basic skills, they would be encouraged to do so through focusing on their needs...'. The incorporation of this dogma into the teaching of basic skills subsequently became the launching pad for selling

'the idea of improving basic skills to employers, public service brokers and to the general public and is now enshrined in the field through the use of individual learning plans (ILPs), despite an increasingly standardised top-down service' (ibid).

5.4. The Establishment of RaPAL 1985

The emergence of an independent practitioner organisation named Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (henceforth RaPAL) was highly significant in the context of the development of literacy practice and policy in the 1980s. Although RaPAL was a practitioners' organisation focused on developing research and practice in the field of adult literacy, it had the major impact of providing an alternative voice and an avenue for scholars, researchers and practitioners to make their input into policy and practice.

In one of its bulletins (2007), RaPAL describes itself as 'the only British national organisation that focuses on the role of literacy in adult life' (p.1), and declared one of its ultimate goals for future development as exploring 'the

possibility of delivering short training courses which will be aimed at disseminating New Literacy Studies` (p.2). Similarly, Moss (2000:1), one of RaPAL's founding members described the organisation as `an independent network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers in Adult Basic Education ...supported by membership subscription only`. More importantly, the alignment to the New Literacy Studies' perception of literacy was and has continued to be an alternative to the rigid skill-based view of literacy that is promoted by government funded agencies like ALBSU and MSC.

In spite of its active involvement however, RaPAL had very limited success in terms of shaping the direction of literacy policy and practice in the 1980s. What is significant, however, is its ability to provide alternative views and a different paradigm for comparison. The impact of this is felt mostly in the field of research and in terms of enlightening practitioners. In the case of the merger of ESOL with literacy, the introduction of student-centred methods appeared to be a form of radical innovation, as was the emergence of RaPAL. These two events were therefore significant in sustaining practitioner radicalism in adult literacy practice if not policy in the 1980s.

5.5. Education Reform Act

The Education Reform Act (henceforth ERA) is frequently described as the single most important piece of education legislation since 1944 (Hamilton & Hillier 2006, Winch 2000). Acknowledging the significance of this piece of legislation, Winch (2000:1) notes that it is a certainty that the legislation `will shape the nature of our education system for the rest of this century and

beyond`. Similar sentiments were expressed by Powell and Edwards (2005:96) who concluded that the `recent increased interest in British educational provision arising from the consequences of the Education Reform Act` is essentially because `The ERA was pivotal insofar as it precipitated what has been a relentless neo-liberal political campaign ...`. It developed a template which has continued to inform and shape educational policy and practice in different spheres within the UK. Studies acknowledging the importance of ERA include Payne (1990:31), who sees it as `a culmination of a move initiated by the department towards central direction and statutory control, particularly in curricular and assessment matters`, Winch (2000) who notes `the diminution in the power of local authorities and educational experts and an increase in the power both of the state and of parents` (p.1) as one of its impacts, and Powell and Edwards (2005:97), who identify a process through which `the generic concerns of British educational policy have legitimised surveillance practices` (p.97). The latter researchers (ibid) employ a mathematical metaphor, `inspection-intervention = surveillance` to present the impact of the ERA. All of the foregoing paints a picture of the emergence of regulation and standardisation as a by-product of the ERA.

In the case of adult literacy, the above was certainly the case. ERA provided a template for remodelling the policy, practice and delivery of adult literacy. It put to the fore a New Right ideology which eliminated the notion of welfarism in education (Powell and Edwards 2005). In what appears to be recognition of the thesis of anti-welfarism, which is reinforced through the ERA's introduction

of entrepreneurship and marketisation in education, Tomlinson (2001:46) notes that what was outstanding about it was that:

'It made the decisive break with welfare state principles (and) in contrast was about individual enterpreneurism and competitiveness, achieved through bringing education into the market place by consumer choice...`.

Where adult literacy policy and practice was concerned, ERA offered a new model for the delivery and funding of literacy. Although a holistic policy in adult literacy which reflected this was only to come later, the dominant discourse in the field began to mirror the dictates of the ERA, until eventually, similar conditions were imposed on the field through the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992.

The emergence of the new ethos of standardisation and control helped the government to relentlessly pursue the agenda of vocationalisation in the field of adult literacy, as indeed, it has done in many other educational spheres. Government agencies like MSC were instrumental in driving through this agenda. Funding for the delivery of literacy became attached to meeting set standards of delivery, evidenced by recognised accreditation, and offered only on a basis of value for money. In the field of adult literacy therefore, the template created by the ERA heralded a clear departure from the themes of entitlement and social responsibility, and their replacement with the economic related themes of standardisation, profitability, employment and competitiveness.

5.6. The Establishment of the TECs

Although the white paper that proposed their creation was first presented in 1988, Training and Enterprise Councils (henceforth TECS) actually came into being in 1989. As observed by Crowley–Bainton (1997:1), TECS emerged as an affirmation of the ideology that supports ‘the trend towards market-oriented training systems’ which ‘gives an increasingly prominent role to the private sector’ and within which ‘Enterprises, in particular, are expected to undertake a proactive role in training’. TECS were therefore the product of a drive to ‘attract private sector involvement and promote enterprise culture’ (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1998:2).

Listed among the priorities of TECS were to: create and maintain dynamic and local economies, support competitive business, and build a world-class workforce (ibid). It is in the drive towards achieving its third priority above, that TECS had the most impact on education in general and adult literacy in particular. Some of the steps taken by TECS towards the achievement of their third priority were the establishment of processes and procedures for investing in employee development, and creating a structure for access to, and delivery of education, through a variety of programmes including Youth Training, Training for work, NVQS and Modern Apprenticeship (ibid). In one sense, this might be seen as a reflection of the portfolio the TECs inherited from the MSC.

TECs shifted control of training from educationalists to industrialists and employers. In effect, therefore, education was ceded to people who consider

profit and economic values as supreme. This formally acknowledged the view that education must be instrumental rather than intrinsic. In their adherence to the instrumental perception of education, TECs mainly focussed on employment as the ultimate desired outcome for which education must be an instrument. Hence, education should be used to prepare adults for the world of work, with the major focus of TECs' programmes on improving employability skills for the economy. However, even this seemingly straightforward if narrow vision had some tension attached to it as is highlighted below.

In a research study on training partnerships across Europe, Crowley-Bainton (1997) observed that there was a divergence of opinion between the various constituencies of the TECS. While the representatives of the Confederation of British Industry (henceforth CBI) 'believe that too much effort is expended on equipping the unemployed to return to work, rather than upskilling or reskilling existing workforces', other stakeholders in TECs consider other issues to be more important. Significantly, there was a general agreement that training and education must focus on employment needs.

This position had a direct impact on adult education policy and practice. At the level of policy, because some funding for adult literacy was provided from the budget of TECS, literacy was located within the framework of employment, thus reinforcing the theme of vocationalisation. Putting this into perspective, Sir Brian Wolfson, the chair of the National Training Taskforce, in his address to the 1990 ALBSU conference, noted that there must be a change in the

outlook of both employers and literacy providers and that 'Employers should give priority to literacy and basic skills because they are the foundation of occupational competency' (ALBSU 1990:1). As noted by Fowler (2005:121), 'literacy increasingly moved into the remit of employment training and alternative provision of literacy courses through local authorities continued to be under attack through funding'. In effect, not only did the TECS influence the direction of adult literacy policy in terms of deciding what should constitute adult literacy, they had the funding tools to implement their vision.

In terms of practice, the TECs contributed to the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (henceforth NVQs) which cover all occupations and sectors (Crowley Bainton 1997). NVQ competences are expressed in terms of a range of activities and a level of competence needed in order to be able to carry out particular tasks. They are therefore in essence a model for meeting key employment requirements presented as competences and therefore aimed at bridging the skills gap. Adult literacy practice began to borrow the competence framework for the assessment of learners. The focus was no longer on assessing learners' progress on the basis of their needs but on the basis of a set of competences that was mainly influenced by perceived employment needs. The curriculum itself was significantly shifted from learner-needs to employer-needs. In the field of adult literacy therefore, as it has done in other educational fields, the new qualification brought occupations into the qualification framework and through this created a form of national framework, which hitherto did not exist.

Most of the interviewees in this study confirm this pattern of evolution of adult literacy policy and practice. One interviewee noted that at this stage, 'you sort of get the feeling that you no longer had control over anything. What's even worse was that the students were left floundering and wondering what happened to their initial dreams' (Resp. 012). Another interviewee added:

'if you wanted your classes to survive, you did what the TECS wanted your local funders to do, and that usually is to take away the individual dreams of your learners. It was all kind of geared towards this dream of vocationalising everything' (Resp. 007).

From the above, it becomes clear that the advent of the TECs fore-grounded the theme of vocationalisation in the context of the discourse of employment and competitiveness. Education began to be seen not merely as an entitlement as it was under the welfarist ethos, but as a market commodity. The elements of standards and qualifications reinforced this notion of education in general and adult literacy in particular. These served as tools for controlling the content and mode of delivery of adult literacy and were monitored through the deployment of a centralised funding mechanism.

5.7. The Abolition of ILEA

One of the fallouts of the ERA was the abolition of the ILEA. Many commentators, for instance Lauder (1991:417), have observed that the decision to abolish the ILEA was 'for political rather than educational reasons...' But it is not simply the motivation for embarking on this route that is of importance here. More significant is the impact this had on educational policy and practice in general and adult literacy policy and practice in particular. For Fowler (2005:121), 'it symbolised' what she calls 'the end of a

previous “Zeitgeist”, and, drawing from Fieldhouse et al. (1996), she locates this in the context of adult literacy provision:

‘ The abolition of ILEA can be seen to signify the removal of power from alternative forms of education provision, and was particularly damaging for adult literacy provision and development. This is significant in the context of the fact that ILEA had been instrumental in promoting campaign events against illiteracy, and for setting up the Language and Literacy Unit (LLU) within which many liberal literacy ideologies thrived’.

Payne (1991) concludes that: ‘A generalised funding crisis in Inner London was found to be due to the abolition of ILEA and the implementation of the poll tax’, and secondly, there was ‘increasing emphasis on job and examination oriented courses’ (Ibid: P1). The abolition of the ILEA therefore drove forward the agenda of vocationalisation, which was prevalent in the context of the existing discourse of the economy and employment. Also, it signified the increased control of funding, such that it could be used as an instrument for enforcing standards and for prescribing the content of what should count as literacy. This had particular significance, as it helped enforce the newly emerging test-centred culture in adult literacy. It signalled a form of decentralisation, which simultaneously initiated a process of closer control. On the surface of it, this might appear to be a contradiction in essence. However, Tuckett (1990) explained that, contrary to the democratic outlook that ILEA’s abolition suggested, the abolition actually increased the control of the central government. He argued that, because schools and small local governments, the inheritors of ILEA could not coordinate themselves collaboratively, it was difficult to form associations strong enough to challenge the central government. Thus, the devolution of control wrested from the ILEA, rather than democratising the provision of adult literacy, simply strengthened the

stranglehold of the central government. As with the ERA, the abolition of the ILEA was essentially the creation of a new formula for power relations. While the former transferred power from local to central government, the latter devolved control from a higher to a lower tier of government. In effect, adult literacy provision became structured in a way that permitted closer monitoring and became subject to a number of prescriptive regimes.

The theme of standardisation, often represented by the imposition of an assessment regime, and the replacement of knowledge by so-called skill, was prominent in the evolution of both policy and practice in the field of adult literacy. Both these were geared towards the achievement of the agenda of vocationalism. The overarching theme, therefore, was vocationalism of education with funding control and assessment serving as tools for achieving this goal.

Interviewees in group two concurred with the above argument. For example, one respondent said:

'We all suddenly found ourselves working to agendas that we knew nothing of, and this thing about qualifications and lack of funding, which presumably, were impacts of this abolition of the ILEA simply kind of swamped us' (Resp. 017).

Another interviewee added:

'It was obvious, at least to some of us, that the government was consumed by this thing about improving skills, reducing unemployment, and so on, because they had this deficit view of literacy. The new LEAs, who inherited the role of the ILEA appeared to be driving forward this agenda' (Interview respondent DM 2000028).

5.8 The Introduction of Standardised Assessment: Wordpower and Numberpower

Wordpower and Numberpower assessment were the first set of assessments to be accorded the status of a 'national accreditation for adult basic education learners' (Hamilton and Merrifield 2000:3, Brooks 2007:3). They provided a template upon which assessment in the field of adult literacy was built. Taking the lead roles in the development of this assessment system were the MSC and ALBSU. Although ALBSU and MSC ostensibly collaborated in the development of the assessment system, there is evidence that this was an uneasy relationship, and that in fact, the MSC took a lead role. Hamilton and Hillier (2007:581) acknowledge this when they note that:

'The national agencies, the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) and the MSC/Training Agency, took a lead in developing ideas about assessment and recording progression (Training Agency, 1989) but worked uneasily through the parallel government departments of Education and Employment (Parkes, 1985). The MSC with its larger funding clout was, as one practitioner put it "in the driving seat" though ALBSU remained the official face of ALLN, taking up 'good practice' and proselytising it in the field through its training events, special development projects and a series of high quality publications'.

Thus the assessment system itself was subsumed within the ethos of skills and vocationalism, which informed a substantial proportion of the work of the MSC. While ostensibly developed in response to the existing informal approach to assessment, it would seem that one of the main objectives was to respond to 'the need for ALLN to be incorporated into the national framework for vocational qualifications' (Hamilton and Hillier 2007:584). But as noted by Hillier (2006), these qualification systems simply added to the 'qualifications jungle' whilst critically changing the culture and practices of ALLN. A quote

from one of the tutors at the time, as reported in Hamilton and Hillier (2007:584), puts this in perspective.

‘There was a very big change across most basic skills work with the advent of Wordpower and Numberpower and with that move to competence based work. Everyone was thinking competency and NVQs based assessments, everybody was developing assignments. The sense of group and creativity got lost except with oldies who had been there whilst it was still crackling and with people who had been trained in that way’.

It is important to locate this development in the context of the overarching discourses of unemployment, economy and the prescribed government remedy of the vocationalism of education. Hamilton and Hillier (2007:580) identified the enabling environment for this development when they noted that:

‘With increasing unemployment, the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and its successor body, The Training Agency, responsible for vocational preparation and training became much more heavily involved with ALLN and brought its own approach to assessment. Major awarding bodies, the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and City and Guilds, offered qualifications in language, communication skills and numeracy’.

But these were merely precursors to the standardised national awards which were embodied in the creation of Wordpower and Numberpower. Although roundly resisted by both learners and teachers, qualifications as an indicator of competence were very important to the FEFC who were at that time the funders of adult literacy. Instructive in this respect are the comments of many practitioners as presented in a report by Hamilton (2005:3). One tutor said:

‘I remember introducing the idea of the open college passport and being able to build up credits and adult students getting certification for work and, explaining for that to happen, we were going to have to keep some records. And it caused complete consternation’.

Another noted:

'if you were doing a basic skills class in literacy and numeracy you had to do Numberpower or Wordpower and the adults didn't want to do Numberpower and Wordpower, they hated it. We didn't like delivering it and they didn't like doing it but it was the only way of getting funding through the local authority'.

Nevertheless, as another recalled,

'Wordpower and Numberpower [developed] largely against the will of practitioners,... I mean when we consulted on both of those... a high number of people were against it...'

The introduction of Wordpower accreditation in the field of adult literacy had three crucial impacts. First, it helped to reinforce the theme of standardization, manifested in the form of a one-size-fits-all form of assessment. Secondly, because providers were compelled to register their learners for this award by the FEFC post 1992, it became inevitable that the curriculum would be influenced by the assessment regime. Teachers were compelled to teach to the assessment requirement rather than to meet the needs of their learners. In this sense, practice in the field began to lose its student-centred approach. Providers were only able to draw funds if they demonstrated evidence of putting their learners through the wordpower accreditation requirements, as only courses that met these conditions could be funded. Finally, and far more important, is that this formalised the process of integrating literacy into a vocational framework. The assessment requirements, which were competence-based, and which reflected the substantial input of the MSC/TA, provided the opportunity to vocationalise literacy provision.

5.8. The Further and Higher education Act and the Creation of the Further Education Funding Council 1992

The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 (henceforth FHE Act) and the attendant creation of the Further Education Funding Council has often been described as the single most important event in the evolution of adult education policy and practice in the 1990s. In the field of adult literacy and practice, the Act is seen as the lynchpin in the dispensation of a political ideology that has since affected a large part of the education system in the UK.

In a lecture given at the University of East London, Alan Tuckett, the Director of NIACE, (2001:2) described the political proposal preceding the Act as one that advocated 'a ban on uncertified adult education'. Within the structure of this proposal, two issues immediately emerge. First is the notion of consent, which suggests that the adults to be funded must agree to some conditions before benefiting from the available funding. The second is the de-prioritisation of adult education and a perception that the promotion of adult education must be subject to state benevolence. Thus, the FHE Act emphasised a political ideology which rated adult education only in terms of its economic relevance.

In the implementation of the Act, the two most significant elements were the incorporation of colleges and the establishment of the FEFC. Linked to these was the creation of the infamous 'schedule two' provision. This identified programmes that could be funded under adult education by the new funding

body. The introduction of schedule two meant that adult education was no longer a right but a privilege, dispensed through a process of selection which was a function of economic values. Tuckett noted (ibid: 4),

'Given tight budgets for public investment (and in the UK this was the era of Mrs. Thatcher and the belief in the flawless efficiency of markets), there was an understandable desire to give priority to spending on areas which seemed likely to make the maximum impact on labour market performance'.

Although Mrs Thatcher had left office by 1992, the system she created was still in the ascendancy.

In the context of adult literacy, these developments had a huge impact on the evolution of policy and practice. Hamilton and Hillier (2006:12) are emphatic that 'it was the Further and Higher Education Act that most affected the future shape of ALLN'. The importance of the Act derived more from its repercussions than from the Act itself. In the first place, the incorporation of colleges meant that, in the words of Hamilton and Hillier (ibid):

'The colleges became incorporated businesses, responsible for their own financial affairs, and an era of competition arose between providers, as they were encouraged to increase student numbers, but with a reduction in the unit funding'.

The response to the Act in the field of adult literacy was a frenzied rush to get adult literacy on the 'schedule two' list through intense lobbying (Tuckett (2001:2), with tutors colluding by 'turning poorly funded uncertificated work into accredited, and therefore, better financed "schedule two" provision'. The effect was that older learners, whose rationale for embarking on these courses was more intrinsic than instrumental, simply abandoned them. Tuckett (ibid) records that this had significant adverse effects on adult literacy

as 'Between 1991 and 1994 NIACE mapped a 40% fall in older learners' participation'. While this might refer to all of adult learning, it suggests that by implication, many adults who really desired and needed adult literacy were excluded by the advent of the FHE Act.

The FHE Act signalled the final step in the vocationalism of literacy provision. Because of the need for funding, many providers were forced to structure their courses in a way that would meet the vocational structure prevalent in colleges. Most of adult literacy provision which had hitherto been located in voluntary organisations and local authority educational services migrated into FE colleges, as they were the ones predominantly funded by the FEFC. The direct impact of this was that adult literacy provision became a business venture as the providers had themselves effectively become businesses since incorporation. Another consequence was the emergence of a central monitoring and inspectorate regime, driven by central funding control. As the FEFC now held the purse strings, they had the wherewithal to impose their perception of literacy geared towards 'upskilling' and vocationalisation. This brought with it the attendant elements of standardization and accreditation, as conditions for funding required that specific content was delivered and that every funded provision must have an assessment outcome.

Overall, the FHE Act became an enabling tool for the government to impose tighter control on the provision of adult literacy and for finally shifting the focus from meeting the needs of individuals to meeting the economic needs of the state. In the course of doing this, adult literacy was forced to change its

structure in terms of content and was subjected to more rigorous control. Hamilton and Hillier (2006:13) capture this evolution succinctly when they describe it as follows:

'The statutory status of ALLN thus changed. It became a designated area of vocational study within further education, with a new scope and goals ... It was subject to a funding regime that stressed progression, vocational outcomes and qualifications and required formal audit. It was no longer open-ended and community focused'.

Driving these changes were the dominant themes of vocationalism, economic competitiveness and employment. Bradley (1997), in his analysis of the impact of the FHE Act, shows how it was used to steer adult education policy towards vocational qualifications. The argument is that the Act was in itself a form of state reaction to the perception of a changing employment market. Presenting a similar argument, Tuckett (2001:2-3) locates the Act in a wider European context. He argues that:

'governments throughout the industrialised world were reacting to changes in technology that collapsed the boundaries of established industrialised disciplines; to the decline of unskilled work and the growth of knowledge-rich work'.

The FHE Act could therefore be seen as the tool for responding to economic and labour problems through the replacement of liberal education with a new-right agenda of utilitarianism.

5.9 Alignment to Literacy Paradigms

With the range of events and developments examined in the preceding section, it can be seen that the provision of literacy between the 80s and 90s moved from what might be described as a critical/social model back into what we have described in Chapter Two as the traditional/cognitive model of

literacy. With the ascendancy of the skills and employability agendas, literacy policy and practice affiliated with the traditional model of literacy. This alignment is informed by two reasons. In this respect, the justification argument as presented by Hildyard and Olson (1978) takes a central role. One of the central issues in their justification of the traditional/cognitive model of literacy is the fact that 'it legitimises the extraordinary efforts and resources that go into compulsory schooling' (p.4). While this might address compulsory schooling specifically, the concept of justification was extended to literacy as a whole. As argued by Street (1984:19) 'The qualities which they attribute to literacy thus take on a more general significance of justifying the vast expense on Western education systems'. With the gradual increase in the funds made available for literacy over this period, it became inevitable that the gatekeepers of the funds, the various quangos and organisations like MSC, TECS, FEFC and ALBSU, would subscribe to a model of literacy that justified their outlay. Thus, through the intervention of funders and other regulatory quangos who prescribed the literacy curriculum and the modality of its delivery, the traditional/cognitive literacy model gained ascendancy in the 1980s and 1990s. The instrument for dispensing this model was closely linked to the assessment regimes that were introduced. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, many of the assessments available were competence-based and therefore had specific outcomes attached to them. This structure is itself complementary to the structure of the traditional/cognitive model of literacy, which considers literacy to be a set of cognitive skills. This synergy then formed another basis for the dominance of the traditional/cognitive model of literacy.

The emergence of monitoring regimes and awarding bodies is also significant. Centralised monitoring regimes naturally prefer a model that offers a set of prescriptive outcomes and against which a provision can be measured. Illustrating this departure from the critical literacy culture of the 1970s, Tuckett (2001:6) observes:

'The dynamism of student writing was diminished when public funding for Write First Time ended... in the... early 1980s. The shift to competence and skills was accompanied by a silencing of strong voices'.

Commenting further on the introduction of the Wordpower assessment system, he cites the aspiration of a Brazilian literacy student whose goals were "to learn to read and write to stop being other people's shadow". His conclusion in respect of whether the assessment system could help achieve this aspiration was damning: 'and somehow Wordpower and Numberpower don't stretch to meet that aspiration' (ibid).

The imposition of the traditional model of literacy created tension between practitioners and funders. As noted by Fowler (2005:125), 'there was a sense of political dissent between the practitioners who were involved in community publishing, with their associated notions of learner empowerment, and the government funded agency'. Unfortunately for the practitioners, the agencies were considerably more powerful as they held the purse strings and eventually saw off other models of literacy that were proposed by practitioners. The period between the 1980s and mid-1990s therefore saw the entrenchment of the government favoured traditional/cognitive model of literacy.

5.10. Summary

This section explored the various events considered crucial to social development during the 1980s up to the mid 1990s, identifying the key players and their input into the evolution of adult literacy policy and practice. It established the movement of transition between participants, paradigms and overarching themes that informed the evolution of policy and practice. Specifically, it established that the key players in policy development moved from being those located in committed voluntary organisations, volunteers and practitioners to other players situated government agencies and quangos. Correspondingly, it also argued that the overarching themes in literacy policy and practice changed from being those of entitlement and social responsibility to those of economic competitiveness, vocationalism and employment. It thus confirms the hypothesis that significant factors changed across time in the evolution of adult literacy policy and practice. This puts into context the comment of one interviewee that:

'nothing much directly happened where practitioners were concerned. Most people simply felt that the control was being wrested from us. And by the 1990s, all one recalls is the fact that we responded more to economic than educational drivers' (Interview Respondent DM 200006).

**Chapter 6: Contemporary Adult Literacy Policy Development:
Influential factors in the perception of the policy development
team (The Moser Committee).**

6.1. Introduction

One of the hypotheses underpinning this study is that there were a number of factors that informed many of the decisions taken by the members of the Moser Committee which commenced its work in 1998 and submitted its report in 1999. This chapter attempts to tease out these factors on the basis of interview responses collected from members of the Committee. In discussing the findings, similar patterns, as well as emerging themes, sometimes divergent on the same issue, are identified and analysed in order to define the influential factors they generated in the process of policy formation. The findings are discussed under the different interview question foci, ultimately leading to the analysis of common themes and patterns. It is important to mention the pattern of responses from members of the committee interviewed. Responses indicate that there was a polarization of views and perceptions among respondents along the lines of a majority as against a minority position. Responses to interview questions provided a majority view usually held by the same five or six members, while a minority or dissenting view was consistently held by the same two or three members of the committee. While this in itself might be significant in terms of power relations within the committee, it is more instructive in terms of discussing the findings which are presented along the lines of majority and minority views.

The committee commenced its meetings in June 1998 and its report was published in February 1999. Though the report referred to an address by the Minister for Employment, Welfare and Equal Opportunities and to the fact that the committee was also 'helped by a discussion with Baroness Blackstone,

the Minister for Further and Higher Education, at a Basic Skills Agency Meeting` (Moser 1999:5), it also made it clear that the working group was actually appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The report failed to elaborate on the committee's term of reference although there was a broad reference to 'clear objectives in improving the lot of many adults whose quality of life can be enriched by enhancing their basic skills' (Moser 1999:3).

6.2. Interview focus 1: Individual perception of previous experience

The goal of this question was to establish the experience and background of members of the committee from the point of view of their own perceptions. The question sought to establish the views of the members of the committee based on their perceptions about the way in which their own experience made them suitable for the role.

There are a number of reasons for seeking this information. First, it was expected that the findings would help to establish the following: (1) Did the interviewees see their membership as a product of their experience in the field of adult literacy/education? (2) What did the members feel they were able to contribute to the task on the basis of their experience? Furthermore, the question aimed to find out whether members saw themselves as representatives of particular sectors or ideological viewpoints. In the context of the present research, these issues are important, as they help in

establishing the source of some of the cognitive themes at play in the evolution of policy.

6.2.1. Summary of findings:

There were divergent views among the members interviewed on the relevance of their experience to the task of policy development in the area of adult literacy. While the majority view expressed by six of the eight members interviewed was that their experience and background had prepared them for this role, the minority view, held by two of the members interviewed, was that very few members of the committee had any serious experience in the field of adult literacy that could have prepared them for the role. The latter two, while willing to acknowledge the need for experience and skills from other areas, felt that the nature of the experiences that were brought to the committee were too exclusive of experience in the practice of adult literacy. Two interviewees who were part of the group with the majority view particularly felt that their background in areas relating to employment training was sufficiently relevant and had adequately prepared them for this role.

Responses to interview question and a review of the committee's report presented the following pattern in terms of members of the committee's experience:

- Following responses from members interviewed, it was confirmed that three members (one interviewed) had experience of contributing to the process of prioritising basic skills for employability.

- Three members (one was interviewed, the second did not respond to the request, while the third expressly declined) had experience of functioning within the structure of a monitoring agency.
- One member (interviewed) had experience of working in workforce employment
- One member (interviewed) had research experience in a number of areas including the relationship between basic skills and employment, economics and statistics.
- One member (interviewed) had limited experience as a practitioner in a related field, but a long time before being involved in this role
- One member (interviewed) had experience of managing a portfolio in which vocational training was very important.
- One member (interviewed) had extensive experience of trade union activities with some focus on on-the-job training.
- Three members (all of whom did not respond to several requests for interview) had extensive experience in economic and statistical research and had worked on several government committees on skills, employment and the workforce.
- There were people from the BSA (one consented to an interview but terminated it abruptly) whose role and experience were not very clear.

6.2.2. Discussion:

What really were the perceptions of the members in terms of the task to be accomplished and the nature of the policy that was to be developed? In the perception of the minority two, there was a pronounced representation of

members with a background in the area of prioritising employment. Some of the perceptions of members of the committee who considered their experience as relevant are captured in the quotes provided below:

'I was involved in careers first of all and I was put forward to colleges early in my career... I prioritised basic skills as the major sort of college priority, and focused on both social inclusion and the employability point of view' (Interviewee 3 group 1).

Another interviewee identified the relevant component of his background as an interest in 'the problems of people who didn't have literacy and numeracy proficiency because that helped understand one of the components of social exclusion ...' (Interviewee 2 group 1).

A similar sentiment was reflected in the contribution from another interviewee:

'I am not an educationalist though I actually spent a great bulk of my career, and indeed spent the rest of it in – largely in education, educational training and employment' (Interviewee 4 group 1).

What seemed to emerge from the perception of a majority of members interviewed (6) in terms of their experience was the common thread that they mostly had some form of experience in areas related to employment and vocational development. While it is true that many of the members were highly experienced in the areas of work-related training and employment, there was very limited relationship to the field of adult literacy practice. We might therefore deduce that the perception of themselves as 'highly experienced' brings into question the goals that needed to be achieved. Were these goals

purely related to adult literacy or were they contingent on the issue of employment?

One of the two respondents put his/her suspicion about the adequacy of the range of experiences in context:

'my knowledge was superficial. But to my horror, I found that apart from one other person, I knew more about... literacy teaching and learning than most of the people around that table. Now that sounds really arrogant... I was horrified that there were no practitioners apart from one other person...'. (Interviewee 1 group 1)

Although interviewed members holding the majority view agreed that they had very limited experience of administering or teaching literacy, they still felt that the experience they had, which was predominantly related to employment and training was highly relevant. This might be indicative of the fact that, for most of the members of the committee, although the nodal discourse pervading policy development was adult literacy, the major theme underlying it was actually employment and training. It was logical for them, therefore, to hold a perception of their range of experience in employment-related areas as highly relevant to the process of policy development in the field of adult literacy.

Recognising the predominance of members with experience in employment and training and their perception of the relevance of their experience draws attention to the significance of the themes of employment skills and training.

These may be seen as a continuation of the drive towards re-skilling, ameliorating what was perceived as dire employment/ unemployment figures and the attempt to vocationalise education at the post-compulsory level, as was identified in chapters 4 and 5. This dominant view as expressed by members of the committee provides a basis for the claim that there was a political and ideological perception that from the onset coloured the vision of the task placed before the committee. In this respect, it can be suggested that the deliberations of the committee were not expected to centre on adult literacy as an intrinsic but as an instrumental educational endeavour. This provides an illustration of the situation where political and ideological pressures might impose one of the outcomes of the committee's activities: the core curriculum in defiance of the views of curriculum theorists and practitioners (Harris 1997/2006).

Certainly, members who held the minority view felt that the background of members was significant to the extent that it promoted the 'side-lining' of some of the more important aspects of literacy and the fact that the voices agitating for recognising these aspects were silenced by the dominance of the majority. As observed by one of the members who held the minority view, 'One or two things were missing, like language, which was sort of sidelined, and one or two people felt it was a mistake' (Interviewee 2 group 1).

Both minority and majority members, in terms of their perception of the relevance of their experience, suggested that the themes of employment, training and skills were significant. For the minority, their significance

represents a lack of representation of experience of real literacy issues, while for the majority the significance is embodied in their perception of the relevance of the range of employment and vocational training experience represented in the committee.

6.3. Interview focus 2: Individual perceptions of group composition

This interview question sought to establish the perception of individual members of the committee of the importance of the whole group composition. The rationale for this was to discover the views of individuals on the whole-group composition and to establish if the composition of the committee was reflective of a pre-determined agenda in terms expectations and outcomes. The difference between this interview question and the first question analysed above can be seen as that between individual assessment of self, as against individual assessment of group.

6.3.1. Summary of Findings:

The findings from this section again presented a polarised majority as against minority views. Five members of the committee interviewed had a perception of the constitution of the committee as positive. They were of the general view that the constitution of the group reflected a degree of competence and that members were simply included on the basis of their ability to deliver a viable policy for literacy. A summary of the views expressed by members in this category include the following:

- (1) The composition was balanced with representatives from various backgrounds including a student.
- (2) There were many powerful people who had close relationship with top government officials and who could argue the case for funding with the Treasury when necessary.
- (3) The group was made up of highly competent people with a range of relevant experience behind them.

Sharply contrasting with the above views were responses from three of the members of the committee, including the two who had a minority view in response to question 1. Below is a summary of their responses on this question.

- (1) All three members were of the view that the group reflected a composition of actual participants and what was described as `on-looking` participants.
- (2) All three members were of the view that too many members knew too little of the subject area of adult literacy.
- (3) Two members (who were originally in the minority) felt that the composition reflected a power dynamics which favoured members with some form of economic background.
- (4) The two members who identified the existence of power dynamics noted that there was a significant lack of representation of practitioners in the composition of the group.

- (5) All three members felt that the composition reflected significant personal relationships among several members and with top government officials.
- (6) There was a pattern of ideological linkage among some members of the group, which manifested itself significantly in the predominance of members with leaning towards labour and employment.
- (7) There was a significant representation of people from the Basic Skills Agency.

6.3.2. Discussion

The contrast in perception between the majority (5) and minority (3) views on the composition of the committee may be a reflection of what might be seen as the divergent ideological leanings of the members. For example, while the majority argued that the predominance of employment and economically inclined members was necessary and, indeed, an advantage in terms of negotiating with government, those in the minority offered another explanation for this configuration. They argued that the pre-eminence of employment and economics proponents in the committee signified the fact that the agenda of the committee was to be driven by the government's economic policy and the move towards skills and vocationalism.

The divergent views on the composition of the committee are captured by the following quotes from different respondents. While describing some members of the committee in terms of their relevance and the role played within the committee, one minority view respondent declared that:

`.. Y knows absolutely nothing about this area, yet he felt perfectly confident to pronounce and decide and actually hold enormous sway, because of course he is a big man in the world' (Interviewee 1 group 1). (Y is used for the purpose of anonymity)-----

`In terms of power in the group, Y was the most, apart from A and so Y was extremely influential with everybody... but I could not agree with a single thing Y had to say... yet Y's opinion was so influential, absolutely outrageous... but there is a cabal of people who are-have a lot of power, who are very clever, who are very close to the senior part of the government, who think they know better' (Interviewee 1 group1). (Y and A are used to for the purpose of anonymity)

The quotes above reveal that there were conflicting viewpoints within the committee, between the more powerful majority, inclined towards an economic and employment argument and close to the government, and the less powerful minority who held divergent views. Thus, the former were able to impose their views which were in convergence with those of the government. It could be argued, therefore, that the prevalent government arguments and policies on employment, labour and the economy were actively pursued by those in the majority within the committee.

A third respondent provided further evidence in support of the argument above that there was collaboration between members of the committee and top government officials to push through the government's agenda. For instance, s/he said: *`...and A would say I saw the minister for breakfast on Sunday and she wants ..., so we are not discussing that any further' (Interviewee 3 group 1).* This interviewee claimed that the standard reply to challenges on A's position included: *`You know, the Minister wants and you know, you've just got to go...' (Interviewee 3 group 1).* It is therefore not

surprising that another interviewee who held the minority view came to the conclusion that:

‘There was obviously no question that A and Y ... felt pretty sure what the outcomes of this piece of this report was going to be, from the very beginning. I’ve got no doubt about it and that X was certainly involved in it’ (Interviewee 2 group 1).

An opinion such as the one expressed above was again linked to the notion of pre-determination of outcome as being very significant in the constitution of the committee. Interviewee 2 confirms this line of thinking:

‘somebody had decided that this was the sort of composition that was needed, and a committee like that assumes that it will get what it needs from the people it collects evidence from’.

This respondent went further to suggest that there was a link between the composition of the committee and a pre-determined agenda in declaring that, ‘... we had evidence from lots and lots of people, but for some reason, those agenda issues just did not get any mention’.

Responses from the majority of members interviewed, who perceived the constitution of the committee positively, also provide some insight into how the composition of the panel might have been value-laden. One such interviewee, while making claims that the committee in his view was ‘balanced’, went on to conclude that the ‘different perspectives were all equal’ (Interviewee 5 group 1). In making this assessment, he overlooked the fact that he was unable to list any serious practitioners on the committee. Indeed, this respondent admitted that it would have been better to have ‘heard more from the private sector, as we were a bit sort of supply-led rather than demand-led’. Encapsulated in this statement is a glimpse of the economic

argument, which would prefer to model the shaping of educational policy and practice on the market model as argued in O’Keeffe (1999:19-20).

Another majority view interviewee gave an insight into how the composition of the committee might have been a product of personal relationships. S/he described the relationship between ‘top government officials at cabinet level’ and ‘an influential member of the committee’. According to this respondent,

‘...they knew each other very well... certainly ... they talked more than once on the committee’s going on... you know informally about what was happening. And err... certainly after the committee ... so there was that link certainly established to... and there’ll have been some strong influences coming in that direction as well. In both directions one would say’ (Interviewee 4 group 1).

This suggests the possibility of putting on the committee people whose views were already known and whom the government was confident would carry out its agenda.

One majority view member shed more light on the possible reason for the inclusion of some members on the committee. For this respondent, the real purpose of the committee was entirely different from the superficial purpose of drawing up policy for adult literacy: ‘What it was for was to effectively persuade the Treasury to spend large sums of public money on supporting remedial literacy and numeracy’ (Interviewee 5 group 1). In this respondent’s view, the above task is not one for educationalists, as it entails ‘presenting them with the argument about why it is good for the economy and the labour market’, and in his view, it is not one ‘for an FE teacher from somewhere’ to carry out. Thus, it becomes clear that, while ostensibly, the committee was

convened to help develop a policy for adult literacy and numeracy, the underpinning factors were the economy and the labour market. These were therefore taken into consideration in the constitution of the committee.

Nevertheless, developments post-Moser, particularly in the development of the SfL strategy might suggest that although the proponents of the economic argument might be more powerful in the course of the Moser Committee, they did not succeed in totally eliminating the empowerment/emancipation arguments. The inclusion of ESOL and Access for all policies post-Moser suggests that in a way, the arguments pursued by the proponents of the socio-cultural perspectives were somehow sustained in the course of implementation. This, on the one hand, raises the debate about how text is mediated between different stages of its encryption (Street 2004) and how policy can be mediated between formation and implementation. This will be examined further in chapter 8 as an element of research Ex post facto (Cohen 2000).

But it is not simply the fact that there was some degree of pre-determination and a government driven agenda that is significant. Rather, it is the identification of significant factors from the viewpoint of the government. If the committee was indicative of government's pre-determined agenda, what was this agenda? If it was informed by the government's views on educational policy, what was this view that was subsequently handed down to the pre-selected members of the committee? From the perception of interviewees, it would seem that employment and the economy were high up on the

government's agenda, a position that corroborates the argument of some curriculum policy theorists (Ball 2008, Pring 2005/ 2006:429).

If indeed, these were the guiding principles underpinning the evolution of policy and if, as suggested, the constitution was configured in order to push a pre-determined government agenda, it could then be said that the driving factors in the evolution of adult literacy and practice from the viewpoint of the constitution of the committee were the themes of economy, vocationalism and employment, as embodied in the notion of social usefulness and accountability.

6.4. Interview focus 3: The government's mandate to the committee

This interview question sought to establish the nature of the mandate given to the working group. While it is clear that a working group such as the Moser Committee would have a mandate, it is important to know the nature of the given mandate. This is significant because it would offer an insight into how the problem was defined and the boundaries within which the committee was allowed to operate. Thus, the rationale for this interview question was to clarify the form in which the mandate was given, what the aims were and how these could have influenced the outcomes of the work of the committee.

The Moser Committee's terms of reference can be summarised as follows. Identification of the effectiveness of different kinds of provision, models of

good practice in delivery and funding of basic skills and how to disseminate them and ways of increasing the volume, quality and effectiveness of literacy and numeracy opportunities across all learning environments (Moser 1999). But the report of the Committee appears to have exceeded the terms of reference with a particular focus on aspects of assessment, yet it provided little evidence of drawing from existing practice. This necessitated the need to explore the members of the Committee's perception of what their mandate was.

6.4.1. Summary of Findings

Unlike with the previous interview questions discussed above, there was some form of agreement on the existence of a mandate. However, there were slight variations in the perceptions of the members of the committee on what the mandate really was. Furthermore, there was an indication from some interviewees that the role of the committee was more to put a 'seal of approval' on a pre-determined course of action than to determine a required course of action. Below is a summary of the views expressed by interviewees in respect of this question:

- (1) Six interviewees confirmed that the problem was already identified and that there was an indirect mandate to provide a solution to the identified mandate.

Typifying this viewpoint was the response of one member who said:

'But A was perfectly clear that there was a problem, and it wasn't a question for saying, go out and see if there was a problem... He started out with the premise that there was one, that action needed to be taken, that he wanted it to be policy priority, and therefore he looks to the committee for these

separate proposals for addressing the problem` (Interviewee 2 group 1).

Interviewee 3 provided a variation of the above view suggesting that the problem that was identified was presented with a preferred solution and that the real mandate of the committee was to give a public seal of approval to the solution. This interviewee noted that:

`...the mandate was for the first time ever, to be reduced to a national strategy regarding the development of basic skills... and then sort of position basic skills very very strongly in terms of the government's agenda and priority` (Interviewee 3 group 1).

Two interviewees introduced the notion of legitimising an already identified problem. From the viewpoint of these interviewees, although the government had already identified the problem, the mandate was to define, quantify and legitimise the problem through a statistical approach. This view is captured by the comment of interviewee 2 in response to a question about the mandate and agenda of the committee:

`the evidence that we had for this, for this piece of work, ... I always thought was quite thin. ... the various bodies that were around and were providing us with free data research... and we didn't carry out or commission the research ourselves, we were writing strategies on the basis of evidence that had been previously provided, possibly in some cases, for a different purpose`.

Another view was that the mandate was embodied in the Chair, representatives of the BSA and a few members who were close to the chair personally and ideologically. Interviewee 2, who had consistently been part of the minority view on the questions explored earlier, put this into perspective through the following statement:

`..we worked through an agenda that was I think determined between the Basic Skills Agency and A`. Let's face it, I think there was an agenda which said an awful lot of work has gone in this area, in teaching, which isn't much good and it is sloppy and it's too cosy and it doesn't produce measurable outcomes through testing, and the whole thing needs overhauling`.

The notion of a pre-determined agenda controlled by the chair was further corroborated by interviewee 1 who had consistently held minority views in the declaration that:

`My feeling was that it was... the topics that were going to be discussed were fairly prescribed... The framing of the agendas were with the Chair. I mean the Chair was very much in control, despite... he was nevertheless in charge, and in control, and holding the things from beginning to end`.

Two of the interviewees felt that the mandate was implied, though undefined, and that it centred on how the policy might address wealth creation through raising skills levels. Typifying this view are the following responses:

`Yes, the mandate had two components. One was, you might say, wealth creation, improving the economy by raising skills levels in the population which an international survey had suggested were very much lower in Britain than in other European countries` (Interviewee 3 group 1).

`There was no doubt that one of the main lines the committee wanted to think about was the impact that improved basic skills could have economically and essentially that means in terms of getting people ... so they are participating in the world of work...` (Interviewee 4 group 1).

These two interviewees also identified the additional issue of ameliorating social exclusion as an adjunct to the central mandate of wealth creation. They argued that the government's agenda, and ultimately, the committee's agenda, were partly driven by the theme of social inclusion. This view is captured in the following response:

'I mean, there were some wider sets of principles about social inclusion and employability, the government's approach to widening access. I mean, the Kennedy Report on wider participation was quite dominant to that point' (Interviewee 3 group 1).

6.4.2. Discussion

There appeared to be a general agreement that the mandate took the form of a pre-determined agenda. What differed amongst those interviewed was what the agenda was. In spite of this, there were a number of commonalities in the positions taken by various interviewees, which suggest that the nature of the agenda could provide insight into the most influential factors in the development of adult literacy policy by the Moser committee.

Contrasting positions in the perception of interviewees were manifested in their views of ideological arguments informing the government's mandate. While one view saw it as informed by the notion of social inclusion and empowerment, the other view within the committee saw it as informed by the themes of employment, the economy and wealth creation. For the proponents of the view that the agenda was driven by an inclination towards widening participation and social inclusion, the evidence relied heavily on the employment and economic situations of the proposed beneficiaries of this policy. A similar indication is given in respect of the view that employability and economic considerations were the driving forces behind the agenda. As such, for both viewpoints, employment and the economy were projected as the important indices of both the current state and the projected position in relation to the arguments of each side.

The convergence of perceptions as highlighted above, suggests that these two themes were particularly important in the shaping of the committee's agenda and by direct implication, in the evolution of adult literacy policy. In effect, these themes could be seen as responsible both for shaping the socio-cognitive reality of the government and for informing the socio-cognitive themes of individual members of the committee. It was to be expected, therefore, that whatever policy was generated by the committee would be concerned with addressing issues related to, or perceived through the prisms of employment and wealth creation.

The above conclusion converges with the analysis of the overall direction of New Labour government educational policy post-1997. As Allen and Ainley (2007:21) argue, 'debate about education policy has been part of a more general debate about how best to respond to these "new times" since governments 'can no longer guarantee full employment or the traditional forms of welfare provision' The response therefore is to ensure that educational policies can only be acceptable if they guarantee that the outlay helps reduce the welfare burden of the state. Thus, it could be argued that the pre-determined agenda that was given to the Moser committee was itself a by-product of the policy that sees education as a remedy for social and economic ailments in the society. This is a perception that would necessarily attract a structure of literacy training that has a correlation with established measurable outputs. It will also see every form of learning as a step towards increasing the nation's stock of human capital in such a way that employability could be developed through education. This will ultimately

facilitate the convergence of educational and economic policies within one systemic and ideological structure.

The admission that the committee was set up as a reaction by the government to a perceived problem is not on its own significant. What is significant is what the members perceived as constituting the problem that led to the mandate given to the committee by the government. While the perspectives of interviewees varied from an argument of inclusiveness to employability, there was a convergence in all interviewees' appreciation of a problem converging on employment and economic well-being. Typical descriptions of the problem included: 'people are unable to work' (Interviewee 3 group 1), 'too many people are not economically independent' (Interviewee 2 group 1), 'improving people's life chances in respect of work' (Interviewee 7 group 1). With the emphasis being placed on the economy and employment by most interviewees, one may deduce that either the government's mandate was unequivocal in terms of the focus of the committee's work, or that members of the committee themselves participated against the backdrop of existing socio-cognitive themes, which converged with employment and economic arguments presented by the government. The latter appeared to be more explicitly demonstrated in the interviews

In summary, responses from interviewees, as earlier illustrated, indicate that: there was a pre-determined agenda; the perceived pre-determined agenda aligned significantly to the themes of employability and economics; the agenda was to a large extent rigidly controlled by powerful members of the

committee who were very close to the government. Together with the established political ideology of the New Labour government, which placed a huge emphasis on employment and economics (Allen 2007, Rikowski 2006), these insights provide a basis for inferring that the government's agenda was itself driven by a consideration of economic and employment factors.

6.5. Interview focus 4: Perception of tools used for collection of data used by the committee

The rationale for wanting this information is twofold: to establish the extent to which the perception of the data-collecting tools coloured the recommendations of members, and to make deductions about the paradigmatic alignment of members of the committee to literacy. In effect therefore, while the findings from this line of questioning might not produce conclusive information on their own, they were expected to provide opportunities for making logical inferences and deductions. As with other interview questions, there were divergent opinions about the tools used in collecting the data that informed the work of the committee. While some were neutral, others were decidedly negative, and others still, relatively positive. A summary of all the viewpoints is presented below.

6.5.1. Summary of findings

(1) Seven members of the committee interviewed identified the tool used in the collection of the data as the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

/OECD although only one interviewee had an idea of how exactly it was used and how it worked.

(2) Three interviewees (regularly associated with minority views and including the interviewee who had a clear idea about how the tool worked) agreed that the IALS/OECD survey focused only on a particular form of literacy practice.

(3) Six interviewees accepted the possibility that the tool and the information it presented might not be accurate.

(4) All interviewees acknowledged the strong international comparative dimension associated with the tool and its findings.

(5) Seven interviewees, including the three cited in number (2) above, admitted that they had concerns about the data collected through the use of the tool, and particularly about the extrapolations drawn from the data.

(6) One member did not have any idea about the tool that was utilised in collecting the data that served as the basis for the committee's work.

(7) Five interviewees, excluding the three in number (2) above, admitted that though the IALS/OECD's result were untested and unverified, they were still willing to accept it as in the words of one interviewee, '100% gold carat'.

(8) All members interviewed admitted that there was no debate about the IALS/OECD survey and the legitimacy and accuracy of its end product.

(9) Five interviewees cited in number (7) above considered the survey as very reliable and useful in presenting what interested many members of the committee.

- (10) Two of the three interviewees cited in number (2) above felt that the tool was designed to measure what people could not do and conveniently ignored what they could do.

6.5.2. Discussion

One of the conclusions that could be reached from the various responses provided by members of the committee interviewed is that the accuracy of the data collated through the IALS/OECD survey, and which formed the basis of the committee's work might be questioned. In addition, some respondents held the view that the tool itself was designed to establish literacy competence based on a particular perception of literacy. In spite of this however, the view of interviewees was that the majority of the members of the committee were happy to go along with it and to make their recommendations on this basis.

This raises the possibility that there might be some convergence between the image of levels of literacy in society reflected in the data and the perception held by members of the committee on what literacy should be. This again opens the possibility of a pre-determined agenda. By agreeing with a questionable set of data which informed the position of the government and its agents, there is an indication that many members of the committee, at least all those who simply refused to question the validity of the data presented, shared the government's vision in terms of the role and goal of literacy. It may be that members who were compliant and who refused to challenge the validity of this data held views that recognised the labour market and the economy as significant factors in educational policy and practice. With such

convergence of vision, it became easier for such members to work with a set of data that they considered questionable.

Another possibility in relation to the validity of the IALS/OECD data provided by the IALS/OECD is the convergence of its framework with the features of traditional/cognitive perception of literacy, which is often justified through the resource allocation argument (Street 1984). An indication from one member of the committee was that the composition of the committee led to the expectation that some members would advance an economic case for the funding of literacy (see section 6.3). It may therefore be that members who saw themselves as having a mandate to deliver an economic argument on behalf of the committee recognised and identified with a data collection tool that emphasises the importance of the economic argument. On the assumption that this was evident to members of the committee from the outset, the spectre of a pre-determined agenda and the influence of economic factors assume still more credibility. For people thus inclined, it is probably easier to use survey data that subscribes to the often-chronicled relationship between literacy, employment and the economy. This appears to be the government's view, and one can assume, the view of pliant members of the committee who seemed to accept the data wholeheartedly in spite of lingering suspicions about its accuracy.

A number of responses from members of the committee interviewed lend some credence to the suggestion above. An example is the response of interviewee 2 who stated: 'In a sense, I didn't mind whether it was accurate or

inaccurate, but the fact that it got them thinking about it is important`. While this might be indicative of the fact that at least one member of the committee might have gone along on the basis of a vision that did not converge with that of the government, it also demonstrated the fact that some members of the committee knew that the picture painted by the data could have been deceptive.

The convergence of vision and the pre-determined agenda arguments were corroborated by at least one other interviewee. This line of argument is captured in his/her response:

`Personally, I've always been in favour of making up statistics,... And what we wanted to do, and my prime goal, was to make the case for the government to put in money. That was it, so actually I couldn't care a toss about the source of the data... (Interviewee 1 group 1)`.

There is, however, another argument that could be made from the responses of some interviewees. Although, at least three of them recognised the limitations of the data, they were happy to overlook this because though the claims of the data were alarming, they were likely to help in making a case for the government to allocate more funds. So, some members could have been pliant even though their visions did not converge with those of the government. For such members of the committee, it is possible that a vision of empowerment and widening participation was primary. One such respondent declared:

`That the figures really, you know, if – and in fact if they want to exaggerate the figures, at that point in the game, good, let's go for it. Because what we want to do is to get everybody scared to death really, so that they'll chuck in the money` (Interviewee 2 group 1).

Thus, there is some evidence that, although with differing visions and goals, some members of the committee were compliant for economic considerations, ranging between the need to justify economic outlay and the desire to have as much funding as possible for the adult literacy project.

At least five interviewees acknowledged that many members of the committee accepted that the data was suspicious because it provided a framework for international comparison. Linked closely to the issue of comparative international performances in literacy is the notion of competition in the European labour market. It is clear that committee members were apprehensive about the potential disadvantage that workers in Britain might have when compared to their European counterparts. This apprehension, it could be argued, was fuelled by the emerging competitive nature of the labour market, which now allegedly demands highly skilled manpower. Pring (2005:428) argues that the New Labour government had a perception that 'the country needed ... a highly skilled workforce in a very competitive world'. This perception led to the emergence of 'a moral drive for greater social inclusion and an economic drive for greater prosperity' (ibid). The literacy problem, as portrayed by the IALS/OECD data, was therefore accepted by some members of the committee because it provided an opportunity to legitimise, especially, the economic drive, while others acquiesced for pragmatic reasons. Following from the above, it could therefore be argued that the subscription of the members of the committee to the IALS/OECD data, which most members of the committee considered inadequate, was

driven by both economic and employment considerations. The following sums up the perception of one interviewee in respect of this issue:

'Well, I think there were political priorities. I mean all this Moser committee is very much a product of the New Labour government in 1997 ... desperate not to throw overboard its predecessor, the Thatcher government's view on Britain being the weak man of Europe, ... hopeless economically... and so they were absolutely obsessed with this idea of trying to catch up with continental levels and skills and were absolutely appalled by this 22% who were supposed to have the reading age of 10 year olds' (Interviewee 8 group 1).

Another interviewee's comment below highlighted the link between the economic and employment factors and the IALS/OECD survey:

'I mean the real thrust of it was more around the employability and the social aspects of literacy. The economic consequences of one in eight people not being of a level of the expected average of a primary person to be... it was more socio-economic' (Interviewee 7 group 1).

In accepting the IALS/OECD data, the economic rationale overshadowed all other arguments. In an indirect way therefore, the themes of the economy and employment, but this time in the context of international competitiveness, were very significant in the direction and shape of adult literacy policy. Responses from interviewees indicate that arguments about employment and the economy were part of the individual socio-cognitive themes that constituted the realities of at least five members of the committee interviewed. The perception that literacy was responsible for a skills gap and employment problems was therefore reinforced by the IALS/OECD data and adopted by the committee.

6.6. Interview focus 5: Possible influence of socio-economic factors

This interview focus sought to identify social factors that members of the committee considered influential in the decisions they arrived at. The rationale behind this line of questioning was to establish if members had a perception that their work was targeted at addressing particular issues, and estimate the extent to which these issues might have affected the decisions they took in terms of shaping adult literacy policy. Although the term social is used generically here, in the course of the interview, respondents were encouraged to look at the wider ramifications of the term and to extend it to cover issues such as social structure, the economy and employment.

6.6.1. Summary of findings:

In different ways, all the members of the committee interviewed admitted that social factors were of some significance in the deliberations of the committee. For six of those interviewed, the initial reaction was to flatly deny the significance of social factors, as typified by the following response: 'it was not in our remit' (Interviewee 5 group 1). However, with further questioning, they all conceded that, indeed, social factors were significant influences on decisions made by the committee. The minority represented by the same two interviewees, who consistently expressed minority views admitted from the outset that some of the decisions made were informed by committee member's perception of the prevalent social situation. Presented below are the significant social factors identified by members interviewed.

- (1) One of the two members who held a minority view linked the vision of prosperity associated with improved basic skills to the work done by the National Skills Taskforce which served as an inspiration for some members of the committee.
- (2) One of the majority view members identified the comparative location of Britain in the European context using the index of economic growth and employment.
- (3) One majority view member identified 'employability' and 'worklessness' as highly significant in shaping the direction of policy.
- (4) Another majority view member identified the huge outlay of government in the attempt to bear the burden of unemployment as a significant factor.
- (5) A minority view member thought the influence of the private sector, particularly the views of the Institute of Directors, was highly significant.
- (6) All interviewees felt that there were social issues that had been identified before the committee was convened and that the role of the committee was to find solutions to these issues. Finding solutions to these issues was thus considered extremely significant in shaping the direction of policy.
- (7) At least five interviewees identified skills, economy and empowerment as social issues that informed the direction of policy.

- (8) One majority view member identified the collapse of manufacturing industry and the subsequent rise of service industries as very significant.

6.6.2. Discussion

At different stages in the interview, all members of the committee admitted that decisions made in the committee were informed to varying degrees by their perception of a range of social factors. In the first place, responses from many members indicated that for the majority, the starting point was the committee's overall perception of the state of the economy and the labour market. For example:

`there was no doubt that one of the main lines that the committee wanted to think about was the impact that improved basic skills might have economically and, essentially that means in terms of getting people ... so they are participating in the world of work at all, you know, they are currently coming to the point where because they are literate or more numerate then they are better able to, you know, they are a bit more flexible in terms of work` (Interviewee 3 group1).

The same interviewee also identified a second social factor, which in his view, informed decisions significantly:

`..And so that the economic argument was really important, it was part of the template of a lot of people in that committee. ... there was [sic] people in that group who started at that point. X, for example, certainly saw a basis for part of the literacy thing at work. And that led to arguments in the committee about whether in effect it is all about unemployment and that we should have a compulsory literacy and numeracy test. It wasn't a wish to be nasty to unemployed people, but actually the thought that this was going to be one of the things that would be particularly important in getting them out and out of unemployment. And I think there is something in that argument` (Interviewee 3 group 1).

This line of thought is given credibility in the context of unacceptable level of unemployment in 1997, which many employers blamed on poor literacy and numeracy. But it is also important to consider the role of the government in bringing these social factors to the consciousness of some of the members. There are two possibilities in this respect. Either the members who recognised the importance of the economic and unemployment factors were influenced by the pre-determined agenda of the government or they were in the first place made members of the committee because of their known inclinations in terms of their responses to these social factors. Views of the minority on the constitution and background of members of the committee as discussed in section 6.2 and 6.3, suggest that they felt that the latter might be the case. While there was no clear evidence from respondents on this issue, it is safe to note that these factors played a significant role in the way some members saw the responsibility they had within the committee.

One interviewee suggested that the issues of employment and the economy were pushed into the policy shaping-agenda by employers, through the argument that unemployment was caused by skill shortages. This view is captured in the following claim:

'I mean, the view was that employers felt that people, the workers, were just hopeless, you know inadequate ... it was put to us that employers were just ... couldn't deal with how bad, you know, the workforce was, and it was considered the reason they weren't employing people was because they lacked these skills' (Interviewee 4 group 1).

This revelation lends credence to the argument that the views of employers possibly coloured the judgements of some committee members so that once again the twin themes of unemployment and the economy have again proved

highly influential in the shaping and direction of adult literacy policy by the Moser committee.

The perception of Britain's position in the context of international comparison also played a significant role in the shaping of policy. The features subjected to international comparison were the elements of employability and self-sustenance of deprived citizens. While the former aligns naturally to the economy, the latter would appear to subscribe to the empowerment and inclusiveness agenda. Shortly before and during the deliberations of the Moser committee, political commentaries centred around, among others, the comparative status of the workforce in Britain relative to our European counterparts and also about the number of people on unemployment/income benefit. Linked to these were concerns about the number of people who were unable to carry out day-to-day activities for which literacy is required compared to the rest of Europe. One interviewee put this into context with the comment below:

'Britain being the weak man of Europe means ... erm... so that was one priority, the economic. I mean yes that was really the driver from the political priorities of the government' (Interviewee 3 group1).

The same respondent acknowledged the humanist response to some of the social issues that could have informed the decisions taken, noting that:

'the other of course was this government, its more humane social face was about social exclusion. It set up the Social Exclusion Unit, it developed a whole string of policies around the idea which comes originally from France of everybody should be able to participate in the society' (Interviewee 3 group 1).

The comment above underscores the significance of the international comparison of social factors, not only from the viewpoint of the economy, but also from the more humane angle of social inclusiveness.

Another respondent argued that prior to the convening of the Moser Committee, issues such as the collapse of the manufacturing and mining industries had already become matters of concern. However,

‘what hadn’t been predicted was that we would become dependent on Eastern Europe and a new range of immigrants would come and so on. I mean that wasn’t on the horizon at all. And that might have changed the conversation somewhat’ (Interviewee 2 group 1).

The above response provides a glimpse of another factor that played a significant role in the decisions of some members of the committee. While Britain was seen as inviting in foreigners to take up jobs that British people could not take on because of their lack of literacy and numeracy, it would seem that this was not the case with countries of comparable status like Germany and France. Although these countries also have large migrant communities, the general feeling was that they did not have equal levels of access to job opportunities as existed in Britain. This argument is supported by the recent spate of demonstrations in France on the lack of employment opportunities for migrants and other minorities. It was therefore logical that this perception would inform the socio-cognitive realities of some committee members and that this would influence the socio-cognitive themes they brought to the policy-making process.

The gradual demise of the manufacturing and mining industries in the UK and the attendant emergence of the service industry was another factor linked to the rise in unemployment by two interviewees, since many of these unemployed people were supposedly unable to take up the newly created jobs because of their limitations in the field of literacy and other basic skills. This social situation thus left room for the employers' forum to exert influence in terms of the direction of the national adult literacy policy. One interviewee was in no doubt that some of the policy decisions made by the committee;

'were driven to some extent by the views of the private sector expressed through the CPI, Institute of Directors, about the shocking and appalling nature of standards in this country around literacy and numeracy and the blame-sort, sort of blame culture developed around the schools' (Interviewee 6 group 1).

In the view of one of the interviewees, all of this becomes more meaningful against the backdrop of the report of The 1995 Hamlyn Commission, the initiation of which, incidentally, was informed by a speech given by the Chairman of the Moser Committee. The focus of this report was on the perception of the inadequacy of education, education as a failing system and the importance of education in the context of employment. Hamlyn's report could be seen as contributing to the perception of the need for any educational policy to consider employment so that job skills became more significant. This was one of the more important social impetuses that shaped the form and direction of adult literacy policy through the Moser Committee. Comments from some members of the committee interviewed indicated that these factors must have registered with many members of the committee. As interviewee 3 noted:

'people on the committee were well aware of the social causes and consequences of um... er... the social and economic

consequences of people having er... poor literacy and numeracy skills`.

The crucial questions here are twofold. Through what medium were these issues introduced into the consciousness of these members? There are two possibilities. On the one hand, it might have been through the government and its agents who in the first place brought these members into the committee. If that was the case, we are again re-visiting the issue of a pre-determined agenda. On the other hand, these notions could have been developed by individuals through their own perception of the socio-cognitive reality of social events. If this was the case, it raises the issue of possible convergence of views and vision with those of the government, which as argued earlier, might have been responsible for the composition of the committee in the first place. The minority view among interviewees supports the claim that much of this was already evident to the government and informed the pre-determined agenda presented to the committee. The majority view on the other hand, while not explicitly admitting that there was a pre-determined agenda, conceded that these factors were already weighing heavily on the minds of both the government ministers involved and some members of the committee. Introducing these factors into the deliberations of the committee could therefore be seen as coming from both sources.

The second question revolves around the appreciation of the causes of the social problems that were endemic within society at the time. Within the committee, it appeared that there was a consensus was that the problems were caused by both the members of the society and by the educational

system. This reflects a value position that has had currency for some time and that sees education as cause and remedy for all social ills. While this view was not explicitly stated, some members of the committee who were interviewed indicated that they subscribed to this line of thought as manifested in their views about the relationship between social exclusion, employment, economic well-being and literacy. This ties in with the traditional/cognitive model of literacy. It is therefore easy for a literacy model based on this perception to evolve against this background.

6.7. Interview Focus 6: Possible Significant Political Factors

This interview focus sought to establish the interviewed members' view on the extent to which prevalent political factors influenced the direction and shape of the adult literacy policy developed by the Moser committee. The rationale for this line of enquiry was the need to verify claims that the policy that emerged from the work of the committee was the result of a dominant political ideology. Answers in response to this line of enquiry would indicate a link between political viewpoints and educational policy development and would serve as the basis for definitive statements on the alignment of political ideology to literacy paradigms.

6.7.1. Summary of Findings

- (1) One interviewee had no clear idea regarding what political factors might signify.

- (2) Seven interviewees expressed the view that the political is inexorably linked to the social and economic and indicated that whatever political factors were seen as influential originated from an economic ideology.
- (3) Three interviewees who recognised the influence of political factors all acknowledged the impact of what they called 'New Labour Ideology'.
- (4) Three interviewees, in addition to acknowledging this economic and political ideology, felt that there were competing political ideologies which include a political philosophy of as one interviewee put it, 'empowerment/do-gooder and the economy'.

6.7.2. Discussion

Most interviewees located the significant political ideology underlying this policy formation within the context of an overarching New Labour ideology. They acknowledged the convergence between the direction of policy, as it was informed by the composition, mandate, and other factors already discussed above, and the visions of the then newly-elected New Labour government. New Labour policy on education centred on the promotion of skills in the context of economic development (Ball 2008). Pring (2005:418) also sums up New Labour policy on education with the term 'Skills Revolution'. The 2003 White Paper, *21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential* aims 'to provide a framework in which Britain might prosper economically in highly competitive world' (ibid:1). Though this policy paper emerged in the post-Moser years, it presents a credible illustration of New Labour policy on education. However, while economic prosperity is most important in the equation generating New Labour policy on education, it is not

a unilateral factor. Rather, it is seen in the context of its relationship with training and skills as facilitators of economic prosperity, with employers and government agencies as key participants in this revolution. As Pring (2006) puts it,

'The essential ingredient is a skills revolution - ensuring that many more people acquire relevant skills. Education providers play a crucial role in this, but that role must be seen within the wider context of a partnership with employers, the Regional Development Agencies, the (occupational) Sector Skills Councils and the local Learning and Skills Councils' (ibid:418).

What this configuration drives home is the importance that the government places on economic prosperity, but, more importantly, on the role that training, skills and the evolution of vocations play in achieving the goal of economic prosperity. As one of the government's flagship projects, the New Deal makes clear, a key belief of New Labour is that work is a major route out of poverty. Drawing from this, government policy on education can, therefore, be seen as being informed by a view of education as the cause of socio-economic dysfunction and as the remedy for these dysfunctions, rather than a symptom of social dysfunctions (See e.g. Allen and Ainley 2007, Pring 2005, Ball 2004 and 2008).

Other educational policies generated by the government since the Moser Committee's 'Skills for Life' agenda corroborate the argument that the overarching political/educational policy of the government is firmly driven by the instrumental assumption that education should be seen as a tool for wealth creation, a position which is usually reinforced through vocationalisation, skills upgrading and flexible employment. A number of the educational policies that have been generated by the current government all

bear the hallmark of this instrumental economic determinism. For instance, Silver (2007:1) while appraising the impact of the Kennedy Report of ten years earlier acknowledged that there were three value strands, namely; greater participation, learning for social improvement, and the economic potential of skills development, which underpinned Kennedy. In Silver's view, only the economic value has truly flourished as 'Lifelong learning and its fundamental value to the learner, their family and their community has dwindled' (ibid). Presumably, this has happened because of the pre-eminence of the influence of the economic value strand.

Other government policies, pre- and post- Moser provide evidence of the government's inclination towards skills development as the centrepiece of its policy on education. A number of these are reviewed below in order to substantiate the claims made above in respect of the government's policy on education. The 1998 Crick report on citizenship, while not geared towards education per se nevertheless serves as an illustration of how hidden values are embedded in educational policy, in particular, a value that is informed by instrumental economic argument. On the face of it, the Crick Report demands that citizenship 'be recognised as a vital and distinct statutory part of the curriculum, an entitlement for pupils in its own right' (QCA 1998:3.1). However, many commentators have argued that there is another side to the policy which is instrumental and firmly linked to the notion of providing supplements for a failing welfare state. Presenting a similar argument, Larkin (2001:1) notes that:

'at least on one level, the citizenship directive is an attempt to curb perceived endemic, antisocial, and disengaged behaviour'

of the young people of this country rather than merely educating them in the workings of the body polity`.

This view can be extended to cover the arguments about the economic benefits of such rehabilitation of young people by the state. But McLaughlin (2000:549) makes a clearer statement on the role and relevance of the economy and skills development arguing that the component of political literacy in the citizenship directive should be:

`seen as involving not only the acquisition of political knowledge...but pupils learning about how to make themselves effective in public life through knowledge skills and values`.

This argument again locates the Crick Report and the attendant government directive in the context of instrumentalism, which in this case, is informed by economic outcomes.

Pykett (2007) provides a more functional analysis of the directives of the Crick Report by locating it within the discourse context of a range of other policies. Within the context of previous policies such as the 1997 Excellence in Schools' White Paper, Pykett identifies the strand of what she calls 'education as a social panacea' (ibid: 304). In similar vein, and along with Ball (2003), she argues that the real intention of another document, Schools Achieving Success, is embedded in such terms as 'tightening control', 'accountability', 'intervention', 'greater choice for consumers' and 'better incentives for performance'. She then concludes that:

`Taken together with the Crick Report, these initiatives form the backdrop to an agenda which is dominated by standards, flexibility and the behaviour of the whole child as citizen in order to maintain the "economic health and social cohesion of the country"' (ibid cited from DFES, 2001:5).

What the above confirms for us is the fact that there are two levels to the analysis of most policies on education. While at the surface there is a 'nodal discourse' (Fairclough 1992), which might proclaim one intention, there is often a hidden theme which ultimately signifies a different intention. In this case, evidence from many of the policies examined suggests that the economy, employment and skill development are usually significant and sometimes hidden factors behind many policy initiatives in education.

More recently, the Foster Report and The Leitch Review of Skills (2006) both display similar patterns to the government policies identified above. The Foster Report and the government White Paper generated in response to it, though ostensibly looking at the position of FE colleges within the framework of education, again demonstrate commitment to the notions of employability and economic competitiveness in the global economy. This policy is particularly significant in the context of adult literacy policy because it focuses on further education, which is the dominant provider of adult literacy. Foster (2005) emphasises the following:

'The need to maximise and fulfil the potential of all our people - young people and adults - to contribute knowledge and skills of world class quality in competitive proportion to the size of our population. Future economic prosperity and good public services depend on this' (P.9).

The report goes further to highlight among others, what needs to be done in order to achieve the above vision:

'To achieve its place in the world economy, the UK needs an education and skills system that: creates a pool of skilled and mobile employees, and re-trains workers to keep pace with changing technology' (ibid).

The line of reasoning presented by Foster is followed through in the government policy paper, 'Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances' (2006). In its executive summary, the paper identifies the following as the purpose of policy.

'our future as a prosperous nation depends on our education and training system. We rely on the system to prepare and develop young people fully for life, and to develop in both young people and adults the skills that are necessary for the productive and competitive economy ...' (p3).

An additional purpose of relevance here is for the FE system to '... be a powerhouse for delivering skills at all levels that are needed to sustain an advanced, competitive economy ...' (ibid). What the cited visions and purposes of both the policy document and its prelude, The Foster Report, confirm that there has been a change in the discourse of education as an intrinsic pursuit to an instrumental pursuit. Within the context of the ongoing discourse, it is perhaps safe to see the economy, the labour market, skills development and international competitiveness as indices of the instrumental focus of educational policies.

The 2006 Leitch Report in its review of skills again tells a similar story. A number of declarations in the foreword to the final report encapsulate the notion of skills development as an all-consuming factor in education. Among the striking comments made are the following: '...our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential' (p1) 'Skills matter fundamentally for the economic and social health of the UK' (ibid). 'Our nation's skills are not world class and we run the risk that this will undermine the UK's long-term prosperity' (ibid) 'Our skill base

compares poorly, and critically, all of our comparators are improving` (Ibid: 2). The final recommendations include: `Increase adult skills across all levels` `Strengthen employer voice` `Increase employer engagement and investment in skills` (ibid:4). There is no doubt that, from the perception of Leitch and those who believe in his vision, economically viable skills should be the foundation of any curriculum, particularly those developed for young people and adults.

Although the New Labour government has not publicly declared the fact that its political ideology is driven by an all-consuming drive for skills development as a means for achieving economic development, the slant of its education policies suggests that this is the case. For a committee like Moser's, therefore, working under the influence of a government political and educational policy focus that is targeted on skills development for economic prosperity through education and training, it is to be expected that these factors will be very significant. This again highlights the blurred boundaries between the socio-economic and socio-political factors in the development of policy. As this case seems to demonstrate, one is likely to generate the other.

Literacy is now as it were, subsumed under another label of functional skills, which is perhaps part of the government's response to the Leitch report. Essentially, the concept of functional skills again emphasises the commitment of the government towards education for employment purposes. This inclination is captured in the QCA's description of `how functional skills will contribute to the adult skills agenda'. It makes no secret of the fact that the

ultimate goal is to tackle the skills gap in England as indicated in the quote below:

'The development of 'functional' skills for adults is crucial to tackling the skills gap in England. Helping adults improve their levels of 'functional' English, mathematics and ICT will support employers' needs to have a workforce that is enterprising, productive and equipped to compete in business. These skills will also assist adults to interact confidently within their communities' (QCA 2006).

We can therefore deduce that the government, as it was at the inception of the Moser committee, remained consumed by the perception of education in general, and literacy in particular, as one of the 'solutions' to a range of social ills, conspicuous among which is a perceived skills gap which has continued to fail both citizens and employers.

While acknowledging that some members of the committee were influenced by intrinsically altruistic factors, one interviewee highlighted the role of the economic slant of government policy. The respondent argued that the political/philosophical value that underpinned the work of the committee was hard to characterise because:

'it was caught somewhere between the missionary zeal of do-gooding on the one hand, and the kind of, you know, hard economics, let's get people, let's get Britain back to work on the other' (interviewee 3 group 1).

Another interviewee corroborated the slant towards an ideology that is generated by a perception of the economy as supreme while also acknowledging that an altruistic and empowerment ideology was influential with some members. According to this respondent, there was a kind of

representation of at least the two political ideologies within the committee as captured in the comment below:

'I mean there were people like A and Y who were um... had a um... I suppose an assumption view of education um... of the ... of the skills gap that needed to be filled to have basic skills in order to succeed in employment. Um... and there were others more concerned about people's own inherent needs for basic skills ... So I think there were ... a number of competing ideologies on the committee' (Interviewee 8 group 1).

From the responses of many members of the committee, it would seem that the other ideology, apart from what one member describes as an 'economicist' political ideology, is the ideology of emancipation, which is frequently described as empowerment by the interviewees. It is important to note that interviewees did not suggest that these ideologies are mutually exclusive. In fact, there is an indication that both were accommodated by the committee. However, although many members made frequent reference to the notions of emancipation and empowerment, very few were able to sustain a discourse around these themes in the context of the committee's work. This suggests that, as already observed by Silver (2007), the emancipatory and empowerment ideological slants played second fiddle to the all-powerful economic and skills argument. This raises the question of power relations between the different proponents of the different ideologies. All indications from discussions with interviewees, both minority and majority view holders, suggest that the adherents of the economic argument were much more powerful than those who embraced the empowerment arguments in the committee. Based on this, therefore, it became inevitable that the 'economicist' political ideology would be more influential in the shaping and

direction of policy developed by the committee. It is important to note, however, that the dominance of the economic argument became reduced as the emancipatory argument gained some more prominence in subsequent developments like the SfL strategy post-Moser. Some elements of these developments will be explored in the next chapter in the context of Ex Post Facto considerations.

6.8. Interview Focus 7: Other Factors

The responses discussed in this section focused on responses from members to the invitation to identify other factors that were not covered by the interviewer. Interviewees were invited to identify other factors and issues that they considered significant in the course of their role within the Moser committee. The rationale for this was to provide opportunities for interviewees to offer their opinions outside the semi-structured focus of the interview. This, it was expected, would leave room for independent reflection on events.

6.8.1. Summary of Findings:

- (1) Four interviewees identified some elements of international influence on the deliberations of the committee.
- (2) The views of the four members cited above on international influence are subsumed under the notions of existing practice and economic competitiveness.
- (3) Three interviewees referred to existing international practice in the context of contributions from America.

- (4) Two interviewees identified the element of indirect international factors informed by the notion of competition with other European nations.

6.8.2. Discussion:

While discussing the influence that international factors might have had on the deliberations of the committee, comments from some interviewees suggest that while some members of the committee were not particularly enthusiastic about a possible American template, the American experience nevertheless had some influence. Interviewee 3 captured this in the following statement: 'But there was a little bit of a sense that, you know, B was going to come and tell us how to do it, which some of them didn't care for very much' (Interviewee 3 group 1). The discussion arose from the fact that an American who had been involved in a similar project had been invited to contribute to the deliberations of the committee. This in itself was an irony because there had been occasions on which people had gone to America to present papers on how America might learn from the British approach to basic skills development. One interviewee's view was that the influence of America as represented by the invited practitioner was not really in the area of policy. Rather, it was to help paint a clearer picture of the urgency of the problem and how this related to the economic well-being of the Western world. In this interviewee's words:

'what they did do [the American representatives] of course was, you know, paint a sharper picture in a sense of how important all this was, how urgent it was, but also a sense of [the fact that it was] a general Western problem' (Interviewee 7 group 1).

But the contribution from another member interviewed confirms the view that some members were happy to look at the American model. Interviewee 1 described the session during which an American representative gave a presentation as, 'probably the best session we had... he gave us - a presentation to the committee, which was absolutely excellent' (Interviewee 1 group 1). There was, however, very little evidence to determine the extent of American influence. Indeed, most interviewees were surprisingly vague about the American influence, considering that it was a factor that was unanimously identified by virtually all of the interviewees. One interviewee however gave an indication of what the role of the American experience might have been. It was more a question of helping to conceptualise the problems faced by Britain as they were considered similar to those faced by the United States. In this respondent's view, many members of the committee

'...thought we shared the same problem'. In terms of the presentation made by the American representative, the respondent felt that the presenter 'was a very important witness to the committee, and made a lot of very good points and which also showed that you know, the issues that we were confronting here were similar in the States for example' (Interviewee 2 group 1).

Though it is difficult to confirm the nature of the American influence in the committee's decision, what could be confirmed is the fact that members of the committee were aware of the situation in America, and also of the measures that had been taken to combat what some might consider similar problems. If this had any influence on the decisions of the committee, it was certainly not in any general form agreed by the committee. What we might be able to infer is that the knowledge that was made available to members may have registered in the consciousness of some members. How this happened is, in

the view of this researcher, an entirely cognitive process and therefore very difficult to tease out.

In contrast to the vagueness of responses in respect of how practice in America might have influenced the decisions of the committee, the notion of international influence on the basis of competitiveness was clearly acknowledged in the responses of many members interviewed. For example:

'Well certainly as I say, we looked at all the international comparisons, I mean we were sort of shown the league tables of where we were as the UK in relation to Sweden, Finland, Czech Republic, you know, USA, Australia and all the rest of it, and I think we were given the impression that you know, we have got to do better than this, that was one of the drivers, ... you know the international comparisons and economic competitors put in front of us. And, you know, if you don't sort this out, you know we will get further behind. I wouldn't say that was done in a threatening way but there was a little bit of that' (Interviewee 2 group 1).

Another interviewee highlighted the theme of international influence through a drive for economic competitiveness in the response below:

'I think the whole um... skills agenda in the early years of the Labour Administration was very much led by a fear that Britain was losing its place in the world.. and a concern that Britain may lose its competitive edge in key industries and services was due to a skills gap and I think it is fair to say that was... that was broadly accepted by the majority of people on the committee'.

This notion was reiterated by interviewee 6 who commented:

'...and Britain feels by de-regulating more than other European countries that it's done pretty well on this, but you can see the Skills for Life as very much part of that, yeah to win global competitions or assist the British labour market to keep up' (Interviewee 6 group 1).

From these responses, it is clear that there was an international influence but not from the viewpoint of practice. Evidence provided by interviewees suggests that the international factor was strongly aligned to the twin factors of the economy and the labour market. It was clear that many members of the committee felt that some of their decisions were informed by an apprehension of how Britain compared internationally economically and in the labour market.

6.9. Summary

Drawing from the series of responses from interviewees, this chapter has established that there was a range of factors that affected many of the decisions taken in the committee, effectively resulting in the adult literacy policy embedded in the Skills for Life agenda. While some of these factors impacted directly on members of the committee and their agenda, others impacted in a rather indirect way. What the findings discussed in this chapter have enabled us to do is to confirm the hypothesis that the factors that informed policy development at the time of the Moser committee had evolved in the same manner that the policy itself had evolved. In other words, it has helped to confirm the argument that policy evolution was in tandem with the evolution of influential factors. Specifically, adult literacy policy has evolved from the influence of factors related to the needs of learners in the 1970s to the influence of factors more recognised from the viewpoint of the funders: the government.

Evidence analysed in this chapter suggests that the most important factors in the evolution of adult literacy policy were the economy, employment and international competitiveness. These themes were continuously found to have been influential on the committee's deliberations, either through a pre-determined government agenda, or through the socio-cognitive realities that members of the committee brought to the policy-making process. The influence of these factors on policy making, it is expected, will have influence on practice. How this has been manifested in the context of adult literacy provision in the years since the Moser committee is the next concern of this research and will be presented in chapter 7.

It is, however, important to note here that the policy generated by the Moser committee was not really a product of total consensus. Rather, many compromises were arrived at and some members simply acceded because they felt that there was some good in it for the field of adult literacy and numeracy. In the words of one respondent:

'The reason the consensus didn't lead to, didn't break down, I mean we, it was desperate to keep the committee together on final recommendations and that was because pleas came through from the adult education area which said for God's sake this is the first time this area has ever had any real attention and the possibility of money, large money, because it's always been the poor relation, ... it doesn't matter what the committee comes up with because it is strong and powerful it'll attract funding and that persuaded one or two people like myself to sort of think' (Interviewee 2 group 1).

Thus, it can be seen that the policy generated by the committee was not the product of a unified vision but of a compromise.

**Chapter 7: Impact of Policy on practice in the FE Sector:
Practitioners' views.**

7.1. Introduction

The data discussed in this section was collected through the administration of an electronic questionnaire. The aim was to establish the impact of the adult literacy policy developed by the Moser committee on adult literacy practice from the perception of practitioners. A total of sixty five responses were analysed. The number was determined by a number of factors including the willingness of potential respondents to participate, respondents' understanding of the issues involved, and the number of respondents who in addition to the two factors above, have experience spanning the pre and post-Moser years.

7.1.1. Areas of Moser policy impact on Practice

Ten distinct elements were identified in the policy document, A Fresh Start (1999). These elements are relevant for this research to varying degrees, as they constitute what is described as the national strategy for adult basic skills (ibid:10). These elements are: national targets, entitlement to learn, guidance, assessment and publicity, better opportunities for learning, a new curriculum, quality, a new system of qualifications, teacher-training and inspection, planning of delivery, the benefits of new technology and funding. The discussion of the responses from the practitioners in this chapter is located in the context of these elements and against the backdrop of the discourses that informed their development within the Moser committee. The focus here is to attempt to establish how the implementation of these elements of the strategy impact on the practice of contemporary practitioners. Although not on a one-to-one basis, it is expected that the impact of implementing some of these

elements of the strategy will align to some of the underpinning values identified in chapter 6.

7.2. Findings and Discussion of Practitioners' perception

The findings are discussed under four broad thematic headings: the impact of policy implementation on practice; the impact of the curriculum on practice; the impact of policy implementation on learners and the perception of practitioners on the model of literacy they are required to deliver. These themes are discussed strictly from the viewpoint of practitioners. Before presenting them, a brief analysis of the background of respondents based on answers to section A of the questionnaire was carried out. This was essentially a demographic activity to enable the researcher to establish the suitability of respondents to respond to some of the crucial issues raised in the questionnaire.

7.2.1. Respondents' background: Findings and discussion

7.2.1.1. Findings

The findings in respect of the background and experience of respondents to the questionnaire (65) indicate the following:

- All respondents have experience of delivering literacy as part of basic skills in the FE sector pre- and since the Moser report.
- All respondents are familiar with the Skills for Life agenda and have been involved in its delivery since its inception.
- Respondents' awareness of the policy has been gained through a range of routes including: attendance at government-organised

dissemination events, localised school activities, self-development, and external events through the continuous professional development route.

- All respondents are currently teaching literacy and, in some cases, other elements of Skills for Life.

7.2.1.2. Discussion:

It was important to establish respondents’ background because it provides an element of validity to their pronouncements in respect of the SfL strategy and its implementation. The fact that all respondents are currently practising in the field provides some validity for their assessment of impact, both on their practice and on their learners. Following from this therefore, conclusions that are drawn from the responses from these respondents are presented from the view point of a practitioner’s reflection on practice.

7.2.2. Theme 1: Impact of policy implementation on practice

Findings from the responses of practitioners on their perception of the impact of the implementation of the SFL agenda can be summarised as follows:

7.2.2.1. Quality and monitoring

Strategy element	Summary findings
Quality and monitoring	(1) 78% (50 out of 65) claimed that the quality and monitoring regime has put undue pressure on teachers. They claimed that meeting the requirement of standardisation and monitoring had encroached significantly on time better spent teaching and creating resources.

	<p>(2) 80% of respondents (52) felt that elements of monitoring are superficial.</p> <p>(3) 83% (54) saw the element of monitoring and standardisation as a game i ticking boxes.</p> <p>(4) 92% of respondents (60) saw it as playing the game.</p> <p>(5) 74% of respondents (48) claimed that standardisation and monitoring are de-professionalising teachers.</p> <p>(6) 82% of respondents (53) felt that the implementation of the monitoring and quality elements of the policy has led to the emergence of `brutish and domineering managers` (see respondent 7 on pg. 8).</p> <p>(7) 25% of respondents (16) felt it has made them better teachers</p> <p>(8) 34% of respondents (22) argued that it has helped to weed out incompetent teachers.</p>
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7.2.2.2. Discussion

A significant number of respondents have a negative perception of various aspects of literacy practice relating to the quality and monitoring elements of the SfL strategy. The percentage of respondents with a negative perception is generally significant as it ranges from seventy two (72%) to ninety two (92%) on various aspects. 78% percent were negatively disposed to this element of strategy on the basis of the amount of time that is demanded in response to it. While some attributed the time consumption to external visits from inspectors, others saw it from the viewpoint of documentation that is demanded by the internal management in response to external inspection regimes.

Typifying the responses of those who viewed quality and monitoring as linked to the impact of external agents are the following responses:

‘ This whole issue of keeping files and records even when they are of no use to your students, but simply because some inspector wants it is just a waste of valuable teaching time’ (Respondent 23, group 3).

Another respondent in pursuance of the same argument said:

‘You spend all your time updating records for some ever threatening inspection when you could have spent the time more productively to teach your students and to develop materials for them’ (Respondent 45 group 3).

Other respondents addressed this from the viewpoint of the pressure that the element of quality and monitoring puts on teachers. One respondent painted a very poignant picture:

‘Inspection has simply made a mule of teachers who continue to labour under the yoke of documentation and evidence. This job has now been made very unhealthy for teachers and many are just going off sick under the pressure’ (Respondent 5 group 3).

Another respondent saw it from the viewpoint of ‘unnecessary time wastage’ and having an ‘undue burden’ (Respondent 3, group 3). From the responses collected, it is quite clear that a significant number of practitioners do not have a positive disposition to the element of quality and monitoring. For many of these, this element is represented by the process of external inspection and the demands that this regime makes on teachers.

Another view expressed by respondents laid the blame on internal management sources. One respondent represented this view with a description of managers as ‘brutish and domineering who neither understand nor appreciate the huge efforts of teachers’ (Respondent 7 group 3). Another claimed: ‘Monitoring has turned many managers into gods, who are unfeeling

and most of the time unreasonable' (Respondent 45 group 3). However, one respondent suggested that the behaviour of internal managers is induced by external factors, adding that: 'Managers are merely dancing to the tunes of their masters at the DFES and OFSTED' (Respondent 52 group 3).

Other negative opinions relating to quality and monitoring elements of the SfL agenda focus on the perception of practitioners on the actual usefulness of this element. A range of 74 to 92 percent of respondents felt that activities around monitoring and standardisation are not particularly useful to learners. A number of respondents saw these activities from the viewpoint of merely playing games. Some responses that created this impression include that from respondent 64 who said 'We are all made to play a game and we are all fast becoming masters at playing the game'. Respondent 27 said 'You only get some peace when you play the game'. Other respondents presenting the same view focused on the aspect of documentation, which they generally saw as a game in 'ticking boxes' (Respondent 55 group 3). Respondent 34 claimed that, 'It is like a pro-forma and if you followed it, you would have no problems'.

However, some respondents, though smaller in number than those who have a negative view of this element of the strategy, were quite positive about it. Although many respondents in this group expressed some negativity about the element of quality and monitoring, they still identified with some positive aspects to it. Some respondents in this group presented their case from the position of how the element of monitoring and standardisation has improved

them as practitioners, while others saw it from the view of what it has done towards getting rid of colleagues who are considered incompetent. Typifying the latter is respondent 28 who said:

'it has made us all sit up and those who are unable to cope are soon shown up and when they are disciplined, they moan about workload and other things'.

From the former group, the following response aptly captures the argument:

'I think inspection and all the activities around it have made me a better teacher with more concern for my students, although it can be demanding at times' (Respondent 1 group3).

Another respondent agreed that:

'Inspection makes us do those things we should be doing but don't want to do like having learning plans for our students, having aims and outcomes and preparing lesson plans' (Respondent 18 group 3).

From the analysis of responses, it is clear that majority of respondents were very negative about the quality and monitoring elements of the SfL strategy even though some of them saw it in a positive light. But how does this relate to the themes emerging from the policy development as analysed in Chapter Six?

The picture painted through responses to the implication of quality and monitoring elements of the policy is that of what one could describe as victims of paradigmatic allegiances. Many of the practitioners felt that providing evidence through a trail of paper audit was considered more important than actually teaching learners. As a result, teachers are compelled to work to a competency model that has been well established in workplaces since the end of the 1980s. This model demands that every step from recruitment to

summative assessment is evidenced in a specific way, and usually using particular forms of documentation. Respondent 16, when questioned further through email, asserted that:

'We are not just teachers any more; we are filing clerks and stenographers. I spend more than half of my time filling out details that are useless in respect of my students. The tragedy is that it is seen as more important than spending time to design useful resources and actually teaching your students'.

There is a link to the model of competence-based training which is also consumed by the provision of measurable evidence. The model generated through the NVQs which originated in the 1980s appears to be the template for this obsession with paper evidence. This in itself is hardly surprising, considering the fact that skills and employment are some of the major influential themes in the development of the SfL strategy. Linked to this is the fact that an educational model focused on skills and employment will naturally align to a vocational model of education. The paper trail serves as evidence of the amount of work that has been put into the delivery of literacy, and as justification for that outlay. The root of the demand for documentation as evidence of quality therefore lies in the adoption of a vocational model which the policy makers subscribe to. In effect therefore, the demands of the quality and monitoring elements of the policy simply confirm one of the underpinning values of the policy makers: education for employment.

Putting this perception in the context of perceptions of literacy, it would seem that practitioners view on this issue reflects an alignment to a traditional/cognitive model of literacy. From the responses provided by practitioners, it seems that the focus of the monitoring and standardisation

elements of the agenda is on documenting evidence of what learners can and cannot do on the basis of an established standard. This naturally eliminates the element of context for different learners and of creating a social dimension to learning. On another level, it brings into play the arguments of Hildyard and Olson (1978) who highlighted the difference between the ‘savage’ and the ‘intellectual’ mind and argued that the huge outlay of resources on compulsory schooling underlines the importance of literacy in changing the ‘savage’ mind to an ‘intellectual’ mind. The element of monitoring and standardisation of the agenda, with its penchant for paper trail and a framework of ticking boxes could, therefore, be seen as a means of providing evidence to justify resource outlay rather than to measure learning. In this respect, therefore, this element of the agenda could be seen as drawing significantly from a model of cognitive/ traditional perception of literacy.

7.2.3. Guidance Assessment and publicity

7.2.3.1. Summary of findings:

Strategy element	Summary of findings
Guidance and assessment	<p>(1) 95% of respondents (62) denounced the nature/structure assessment toolkit</p> <p>(2) 85% of respondents (55) felt that the advice and guidance regime does not provide real options to learners.</p> <p>(3) 88% of respondents (57) felt that the initial assessment exercises used during the A&G are merely designed to test for grammar knowledge.</p> <p>(4) 69% of respondents (45) felt that the initial assessment tools are very useful for placing learners.</p>

7.2.3.2. Discussion

A range of 69 to 95 percent of respondents held negative views about the initial assessment and guidance elements of the strategy. Negative responses seemed to focus on two key issues. The first addressed the toolkit that is frequently used for initial assessment, while the other focuses on the usefulness of advice provided to potential students. 95% of respondents (62) questioned the quality of the assessment toolkit, which they identified as the Basic Skills Agency produced Initial assessment tests. Some of the responses condemning the toolkit include the following 'The initial assessment toolkit simply does not test language competence. It focuses more on elements that can be neatly fitted into boxes' (Respondent 55). Respondent 20 asserted that, 'the tests only focus on grammar, spelling and punctuation as if these were the only components of literacy'. A more damning response claimed that the tests 'are another avenue for ticking boxes as they are neither fair nor valid' (Respondent 64 group 3) while respondent 30 felt that the tests failed to take into account the learners and was more concerned with recording performance. This respondent said:

'We put a booklet full of questions in front of people who are frightened of writing and reading and we declare this is a valid test. These tests simply don't provide an accurate description of students' competence'.

85% of respondents questioned the quality of the advice provided to students. The focus of this question was on the options available to learners. These respondents felt that most providers did not really have options to offer their recruits and only offered what they had designed in response to funding conditions. According to respondent 11:

` Advice and guidance is a waste of time and resources. We really don't have options for students. We can't provide them with what they demand and we only display what we have already decided to provide to them` (Respondent 11 group 3).

However, a significant number of respondents acknowledged the assessment toolkit as useful. This included respondents who also identified shortcomings of the initial assessment toolkit. This might on the surface of it indicate a measure of contradiction with finding (1) above. However, it seems that the issue here is that while many practitioners feel that the toolkit itself was not well-designed, they still acknowledged the role it plays as an instrument for placing their learners. In a sense, this raises a debate on what the role of initial assessment should be. From the viewpoint that it is essentially an instrument for placing learners, the toolkit could be seen as playing its role. If, however, there are other roles to be played, it could be argued that the negative comments of these participants were in respect of the additional roles of initial assessment.

Representing such views are the following responses: 'Though the assessment toolkit is not well designed, it still helps a lot in placing students' (Respondent 16 group 3) and 'Though the initial assessment toolkit is not as good as it could be, it is very useful for placing students' (Respondent 11 group 3).

The responses presented above, together with the analysis of the disposition of practitioners, confirm that many of them did not see the element of initial assessment and advice and guidance of the SfL strategy as suitable. Is there

a link between their perception and the themes identified in the development of the strategy by the Moser Committee in Chapter Six? This is what is attempted next.

Respondents had no concerns with the principle of administering initial and diagnostic tests. What they appeared to be contesting was the nature of these assessment exercises. For many respondents, the exercises were designed in a way that merely tested for specific knowledge type. It is particularly interesting that these exercises test for grammatical knowledge and other such knowledge bases that could be easily recorded and ticked off. There are two points to be made in respect of this. First is the fact that such testing reflects the perception of literacy to which the designers of the assessment exercises align. As highlighted in the discussion on the preferred tools for measuring literacy in Chapter Six, it was suggested that the IALS/OECD tool that presented the data upon which the work of the Moser Committee was based was derived from a traditional/cognitive perception of literacy. This model of literacy naturally recognises such easily measurable components of language use as grammar as one of the central knowledge bases in literacy. The development of the assessment exercises, which practitioners found inadequate, demonstrates alignment to the traditional/cognitive model of literacy. In its description of the new curriculum element of its strategy, the Moser Report identifies 'comprehension, punctuation and spelling' as illustrations of key building blocks of language use. This perception has been directly transferred to the structure of the assessment exercises and forms the focus of such tests.

The second point relates to the vocational nature of the type of literacy that the Committee's recommendations appear to be promoting. As argued in the preceding section, such a model of education will attract a paper trail and a range of other forms of documentation as evidence for the justification of expenses. The structure of the initial and diagnostic assessments is such that evidence and documentation can be easily generated manually or through the use of computers. According to some respondents, 'computer based initial and diagnostic assessments', which are totally de-personalised are commonly used. The analyses carried out through the use of computerised packages are based on a view of language learning and use as competences that can be tabulated and assessed in the same way that work competences are assessed. It is logical, therefore, to argue that the assessment tools are a product of the perception of literacy through the prism of work skills. This tallies with the inclination of the committee, as one of the more influential factors in the generation of its policy was the perception of education as a tool for employment and skill upgrade.

The view that the advice and guidance activities do not offer real options to learners is worthy of analysis. The development of the literacy curriculum post-Moser is shaped by a strict adherence to standards. The cognitive/traditional perception of literacy, which the Moser committee found very attractive, as demonstrated in its use of the IALS/OECD research data, guaranteed this allegiance to a standard. This allegiance manifests itself in the structure of literacy courses that are offered by providers governed by the SfL agenda. It therefore becomes inevitable that courses that are provided

adhere rigidly to specified standards. All of the above suggests that the principle underpinning the development of the initial assessment tools are driven by an inclination to the traditional/cognitive model of literacy. This positions which promotes the design of assessment tools that measure predominantly, perceived cognitive abilities. This eliminates the social and contextual elements of literacy as a social practice and creates one-size-fits all framework of assessment. It is perhaps because of this that some practitioners lament the ‘placement of learners in classes which they consider by far too low for them’.

7.2.4. Meeting targets

7.2.4.1. Findings

Strategy element	Summary of findings
Meeting targets	<p>(1) 89% of respondents (58) identified unsustainable numbers of learners as one of the adverse fall-outs of targets set by the strategy.</p> <p>(2) 69% of respondents (45) admitted that they had taught literacy classes with 20 or more learners.</p> <p>(3) 72% of respondents (48) felt that their work has been made more difficult because they had been forced to retain learners who were unwilling to learn because of the drive to meet targets.</p> <p>(4) 60% of respondents (39) noted that the drive towards numbers had led to problems with what a respondent described as ‘conscripted learners’ who really have no interest in literacy.</p> <p>(5) 58% of respondents (37) felt that the drive for numbers had impacted positively on literacy learners in terms of extra support provided in order to retain learners and the conscious drive for recruitment initiated by many providers.</p>

7.2.4.2. Discussion

A range of sixty to eighty nine percent of respondents (39 to 58) saw the element of meeting targets as impacting negatively on their practice. For many respondents, the problem centred on the sizes of classes they were compelled to teach, the type of students in some cases and the sustainability of their classes. Many respondents felt that because of the drive to meet the targets set in the SfL strategy, providers are forced to recruit many students, who in the first place are not particularly interested in studying literacy. 'Respondent 23 described what s/he saw as 'conscripted students' who were either sent to colleges by job centres or New Deal programmes and were 'interested in studying other courses, but compelled to study literacy' by colleges which either could not offer them their preferred choices, or saw them as providing an 'opportunity for meeting their set targets' (ibid).

Other respondents highlighted the large literacy classes they taught. They felt that classes with such large numbers of students were 'simply not viable for teaching literacy' (Respondent 39 group three). Other responses that point to the perceived problem with class sizes included the following:

'You have classes that are simply so large that you don't know what to do' (Respondent 27 group 3). 'With such large classes, one is unable to meet the needs of individual learners' (Respondent 19 group 3), and in relation to sustainability, respondent 48 said:

'We are told to continue to recruit students into our classes even though it is obvious that we can't sustain such large numbers. It is all about meeting targets' (Respondent 22 group 3).

Another respondent said:

`We are made to take in students who really do not want to be there and who later become problems for the rest of the class. What is worse is the fact that you can't send these students away because the college wants to meet its target` (Respondent 48 group 3).

However, 58% of respondents (37) conceded some positive outcomes from implementing this element of the SfL strategy, in spite of the fact that many had earlier identified its negative impact. For example, Respondent 48, who had earlier identified the negative impact of problem students, also felt that there was some good emanating from the drive to meet targets because of *`the provision of extra support for many students in order to retain them`*. Another respondent saw the positive impact from the viewpoint of *`the recruitment drive reaching many otherwise hard to reach students`* (Respondent 61 group 3), while another cited the *`need to meet targets`* as making us *`go the extra mile in order to attract students`* (Respondent 44 group 3).

Overall, however, practitioners' perception of the drive to meet targets set through the SfL strategy was more negative than positive. But is there a relationship between this view and the themes originating from policy conception as described in Chapter Six? Such a possibility is explored below.

The rationale for introducing targets in the SfL strategy provides an explanation for some of the observations made by practitioners in respect of recruitment. The rationale for this element of the strategy is hinged upon the argument that almost 20% of adults in Britain have problems with literacy. In the first place, this claim is justified only in the context of a particular

perception of literacy. But more importantly, it is generated by the IALS/OECD data, which is itself informed by a cognitive/traditional perception of literacy. If, as evidenced by its acceptance by the Moser committee, the IALS/OECD data confirms that such a huge number of people have problems with literacy, it is only logical for the policy generated by people who believe in the data to reflect that in their target setting.

The adoption of the IALS/OECD data naturally had an impact on the aspirations of literacy providers. For example, because local targets were set, indicating what the expectations were for each sub-region in the eradication of what many classified as 'illiteracy', it became inevitable that individual providers would have specific targets to meet. It was perhaps the impact of this target-setting that resulted in the drive for recruitment, even when the available resources were inadequate. This discussion further ties in with the debate on what constitutes literacy. While the traditional/cognitive model of literacy will describe it on the basis of cognitive competence, the New Literacies model would factor in social and contextual elements. In the context of the Moser Committee's recommendations where targets are concerned, it would seem that the targets were set on the basis of the committee's perception of what constitutes literacy. In this case, it seems that this is driven by a traditional/cognitive perception of literacy. In the view of some practitioners, this aspiration to meet targets has driven some colleges 'to focus on recruiting disruptive 16 – 19 year olds, who are already familiar with exam mode and who are likely to achieve to the detriment of the really needy adults' (Respondent 36 group 3).

The drive to sustain recruitment further was given impetus by the linkage of recruitment and funds. This claim is lent credence by the profit-oriented inclinations of FE colleges who are the main providers of adult literacy. Since incorporation, colleges have operated more like profit-making organisations and have subscribed more to the instrumental values of the market economy than the intrinsic value of education (Allen and Ainley 2007). In order to continue to generate funds with which to run their 'businesses', colleges have had to find ways of recruiting more and more students, as their funding level is attached to the number of students they are able to recruit and retain. This relationship, it can be argued, is at its optimum in the case of implementing the SfL agenda. Not only were colleges looking to recruit more, they were in fact encouraged by the funding parameter incorporated into the policy. It is therefore not surprising that these factors impacted on practitioners in terms of the number of learners they had to teach. Thus, there appears to be a link between perceptions, policy implementation and practice. At the level of perception is the adoption of a cognitive view of literacy, manifested in the IALS/OECD data adopted by the committee with a particular view on what constitutes literacy. In this case, it seems that the answer to the question is provided from the viewpoint of traditional/cognitive model of literacy. Linked to this, is the policy, which demands that local targets be set and enforced by providers. The final link in the chain is the impact that this has on practice, not only in terms of over-sized classes, but also in terms of time spent by teachers on recruitment and the quality of teaching, which is adversely affected by the large sizes of many classes.

It is important to look at the link between literacy recruitment and other government projects such as the New Deal, as highlighted by some respondents who observed that many students under New Deal programme were recruited into literacy classes. This suggests, first that there was a view that New Deal students, who were predominantly unemployed, were in that situation because of 'illiteracy'. This suggestion tallies with a perception of education as a panacea for unemployment and other social ills, a view that was whole-heartedly adopted by the Moser committee.

It must, however, not be overlooked that there can be some justification for this perception. Principal in this regard is the fact that several government-commissioned research studies have provided evidence of a strong link between unemployment and poor literacy skills (Bynner 2001, Field 2001). Whether one accepts the arguments inherent in these studies or not, the fact remains that they have offered statistically valid data as evidence of this relationship. As such, while one might disagree with the underpinning perception behind these studies, it is difficult to disagree with the data provided as evidence.

Second, the tacit agreement between job centres, which are government agents, and literacy providers to enrol jobseekers on literacy courses suggests that the government itself might be consciously finding ways of justifying outlandish claims in terms of the number of people who are 'illiterate'. By ensuring that jobseekers are 'conscripted' into literacy classes,

the government was trying to ensure that an adequate number of literacy students were `processed yearly` in order to lend credence to its claims in terms of the number of people who require literacy. In this respect, therefore, there appears to be a convergence of interest between the government, its agencies and colleges. This convergence was solidified on the one hand by the government's search for credibility, and on the other hand, by the colleges' search for profitability.

The positive observation that the drive to increase numbers provided opportunities for many learners can possibly be explained by the following argument. Because many colleges had to meet their targets in terms of numbers, many of them were forced to use unconventional methods in advertising and recruiting onto their literacy courses providing opportunities for traditionally hard-to-reach people. This might be seen as evidence that the implementation of the policy addresses the often vaunted, but little evidenced theme of empowerment that some members of the committee laid claims to. If indeed many more people were reached and recruited to literacy classes and if indeed they benefited from these classes in terms of meeting their own needs, it can be argued that the implementation has indeed promoted the empowerment of people through its recruitment.

7.2.5. Funding

7.2.5.1. Summary of Findings

Element of strategy	Summary of findings
Funding	(1) 95% of respondents (62) felt that conditions attached to funding have coerced

colleges to manipulate both their learners and information they provide to the authorities.

(2) 55% of respondents (36) felt that funding for SfL courses after the first few years negated the principles of equal opportunities.

(3) 65% of respondents (42) claimed that limiting funding to Entry level 2 and lately Entry level 3 had left out many needy learners.

(4) 92% of respondents felt that virtually all aspects of their work were conditioned by the drive towards meeting funding conditions.

(5) 40% of respondents (26) felt that every aspect of their colleges' delivery of literacy was informed by funding demands.

(6) 95% of respondents (62) felt that in spite of the huge income generated by SfL departments, not enough was done in terms of human resources as many classes were still been taught by part-time lecturers.

(7) 60% of respondents (39) confirmed that the funds the departments that provide SfL courses bring to the colleges had improved their profile and provided them with more resources.

(8) 60% of respondents (39) felt that the limitations on funding beneficiaries had frequently forced them to place students at levels higher than their competence, due to management pressure.

7.2.5.2. Discussion

Responses to questions on the impact of the funding element of the SfL policy generated varied responses. While some of the responses focused on how the workloads of teachers had been consumed by the need to meet funding requirements, others complained about how the funds generated were spent

with SfL sections getting less than many respondents felt they deserved. This point was linked to the recruitment of teachers and the over-reliance on hourly paid tutors. Some respondents stressed the problem of equal opportunities in terms of the level of learners that funding was available for. However, responses also indicated the positive impact of funding for SfL departments through an increase in resources and an improved profile for such departments.

Respondents who indicated that the need to meet funding requirements had become all-consuming identified as major problem areas, the drive towards evidence of achievement rather than learning, and the continuous retention of absent learners on the register. Respondent 2 commenting on students' freedom to leave and return to their classes at will noted that:

'We are not allowed to take the names of non-attending students off the register permanently. Whenever they choose to return, we are expected to put them back on the register, supposedly because the college only gets funding for students on the register. What message are we sending to students? '

Respondent 54, focusing on the role of assessment and certification induced by the funding regime observed that:

'You spend virtually all your time preparing students for assessment, because there is some funding attached to achievement. Many of these students actually learn very little in terms of actual literacy skills'.

From the group of respondents who argued that only a limited proportion of the generated funds were spent on SfL departments, the following comments are instructive: 'The college gets the entire fund and spends it on other departments. We continue to rely on hourly-paid teachers, who understandably cannot be fully committed' (Respondent 17 group 2).

Respondent 28 explained that, 'The fund generated is never fully re-invested into the departments that generated them' (Respondent 28 group 3).

Some respondents, citing the limitations placed on the level of students who could be funded, observed that this had adverse effects on both the opportunities available to potential students and on the appropriate placement of some students. Respondent 9 observed that:

'Because funding is only available for entry level three learners, and before that, entry level two learners, we are forced to enrol students at these levels even when they clearly belong to lower levels. If we didn't do this, we would forfeit a lot of funding. It is just unfair on many students'.

Emphasising the equality of opportunities theme, Respondent 13 commented:

'There is no equity in the opportunity to learn as some students are denied the opportunity to enrol because they do not belong to levels that are funded'.

However, some respondents acknowledged the positive image that the funds generated by the SfL departments had accorded them. Respondent 49 declared that:

'As a department, we are more important to the college than we have ever been. We now have resources that we could only dream of a few years ago: Electronic white boards, computers and books. Whatever else we might say, funding associated with Skills for Life has been useful'.

From the above, it is clear that respondents generally saw funding and its impact as a mixed blessing. To some extent, they felt that the funding element had impacted positively on departments providing literacy, particularly from the viewpoint of providing resources. From another perspective, respondents

felt that there was some negativity induced by the funding requirements of the strategy, particularly as it impacted on teaching, learning and learners.

As discussed in the preceding section, it is inevitable that colleges have become influenced by different funding regimes since they were incorporated. However, the findings highlighted above again underscore the link between the ideological leanings that informed the work of the Moser Committee and the type of policy they generated. It is clear that the Committee was dominated by the perception of education as a tool for developing employability. With a funding regime that recognised only entry level 3 courses, it could be argued that what the implementation of the SfL agenda did was to actualise the vision of the committee that generated it. Supporting this argument is the fact that literacy skills at levels lower than entry 3 cannot be seen as useful for employment purposes. At entry 1, it can be assumed that the literacy skills acquired are merely for the use of the learner, usually in their personal lives, while at level 3 it is expected that literacy skills can enable students to participate to some extent in workplaces. The argument that the funding regime is discriminatory can thus be sustained. Discrimination is essentially in favour of work skill provision as against those who are not at the level that can facilitate participation at work. More significantly, the implementation of the funding element echoed the viewpoint of the committee on the goals of education.

If the above argument is accurate, it provides evidence of an alignment between the funding regime and a traditional/cognitive perspective of literacy.

A focus on itemised skills and competences echoes the emphasis of traditional model of literacy on cognitive capabilities. In this case, it would seem that only cognitive competences that are considered suitable for work and which are manifested through literacy skills are considered suitable for funding. Skills lower than this, but which might be useful in other social contexts are by implication not worthy of funding, as it will always be difficult to provide a tradition/cognitive literacy induced justifications for such an outlay. Based on this, one can argue that the funding regime of the agenda is itself driven by an ethos of the traditional/cognitive perception of literacy.

While the conclusions drawn above might be logical, it is important that we look at the issue of policy mediation. Although many participants indicated that the exclusion of learners under entry 3 was based on policy directives, none could actually provide evidence that this was the case. There certainly are no official documents confirming this. This raises the issue of mediating literacy text which Street (1984) described in the context of Maktab literacy. Street argues that just as the proponents of cognitive literacy denounce orality for its non-permanent and ever-changing nature, they must recognise that written text can also change through participants' mediation over time. In the same way, it is possible that the introduction of a funding condition that eliminated learners below entry three was introduced through the mediation of bureaucrats or indeed, college executives, who might have their own vision imposed on the policy they are mandated to mediate and deliver.

The observation that funding often compels wrong placement of learners because only particular levels of provision attract funding is also very significant. It is an irony that one of the often-banded catch phrases associated with the SfL agenda is 'meeting the learner's needs'. However, the limitation placed on funding suggests that the provision of literacy is more about meeting the colleges' needs rather than meeting the needs of learners. This echoes one of the values that informed the work of the Committee that generated the policy. Literacy, as perceived by the Committee, was to be developed in such a way that it would enable it to meet the government's vision of what society should be, rather than to meet the perception of individuals of their own needs. This is another convergence of vision and the manifestation of the underpinning values of policy on implementation and practice.

The combination of funding and targets is bound to have an impact on the departments delivering adult literacy in colleges. In the first place, the market principle of acknowledging the source of income might be at play here. In the context of the local targets that were set and the funds that meeting these targets attract, it is inevitable that literacy departments will generate substantial sums of money for colleges. As a profit-making organisation, it is logical that many colleges will pay attention to this source of additional income. In many cases, this comes in the form of additional teaching and learning resources.

It is however interesting to note the responses that suggested that little attention is paid to human resources as many teachers are still employed on hourly contracts. The argument about increased income and the raised profile of SfL departments seems to justify the compromise stance taken by some of the members of the Moser committee, who as discussed in Chapter Six, consented to some of the decisions on the grounds that some money will be allocated to literacy, and that it would improve the profile of that area of work. In terms of the retention of the hourly paid/part-time tutors, there are two points to be made. First, this negates the element of teacher training and staff development in the SfL strategy. Although the strategy aimed to ensure that 15,000 full time places were filled, the reality is that many providers still employ teachers on an hourly basis, presumably because it is cheaper. The second point is closely linked to the first. For organisations like colleges that subscribe to market economy principles, it is logical to expect that costs will be cut to the minimum possible, while profitability will be pursued as vigorously as possible. In using hourly paid tutors, what many colleges have been doing is to try as much as possible to cut costs while increasing profit. More importantly, there is a link between the ethos of competitiveness and a market force informed notion of educational policy, which played a very significant role in the generation of policy by the Moser committee. In this sense therefore, the impact of implementing the policy element of the strategy can be seen as reflecting some of the principles that generated the policy in the first place.

7.2.6. Assessment

7.2.6.1. Summary of Findings

Element of policy	Summary of findings
Assessment	<p>(1) 97% of respondents (63) stated that their teaching is now assessment-driven.</p> <p>(2) 74% of respondents (48) claimed that the linkage between assessment and funding has led to an indiscriminate imposition of examinations on learners regardless of their needs.</p> <p>(3) 85% of respondents (55) felt that assessments provided by awarding bodies do not really measure learning but simply provide a route for the label of qualifications.</p> <p>(4) 89% (58) felt that they are compelled to spend a disproportionate amount of time on preparing learners for examination rather than teaching them.</p> <p>(5) 72% (47) felt that successful assessment results are highly motivating for many learners who feel very proud of their achievements.</p>

7.2.6.2. Discussion

Negative responses on the impact of the assessment element of the SfL strategy can be viewed from two perspectives. While some respondents highlighted the impact on learners in terms of undermining their needs, others highlighted the effect on the content and process of teaching. For those in the former group, their arguments centred on the imposition of examinations on learners and the failure of examinations to measure student learning. For the other group, the problem concerned the disproportionate amount of time spent on preparing students for examinations. Typifying the latter is the following comment. ‘We spend most of our teaching time preparing students for C&G exams, which are neither useful nor desirable to many of our

students` (Respondent 1 group 3). Representing the views held by the former is the comment of a respondent that `We are not able to teach our students conscientiously. We just prepare them for examinations` (Respondent 60 group 3).

As with most elements of the strategy, some respondents identified a positive side to the above, even though they noted the negative side. Most positive comments were based on motivation for learners and an increasing element of pride in their own achievements displayed by some learners. As observed by respondent 60, who had earlier made negative comments on the impact of assessment:

` While I disagree with the imposition of examinations on all students, it is true that many students are highly motivated by examinations and are immensely proud of their achievements in these examinations` (ibid).

How these views relate to the significant themes identified in Chapter Six are explored below. One of the over-riding themes emanating from respondents on assessment appears to be that too much attention is paid to tests. I have used the term `tests` here to make a distinction between the concept of assessment for learning purposes, which is often referred to as formative, and assessment for accreditation purposes, which is often referred to as summative assessment. In the view of the researcher, the focus on summative assessment derives from the perception of the Moser committee and some of the government agencies that were created in its aftermath. For one, the Moser committee was influenced by the perceived success of targets in securing improvement in schools and therefore borrowed from the principles of the government public service agreements, which link the release

of money to the achievement of prescribed learning goals (Lavender, Derrick and Brooks 2004). In the context of adult literacy, the only way in which such achievements can be measured is through learners' achievement in externally designed tests. It is therefore not surprising that colleges, who are in the business of profit making and survival, are left with little option but to strictly ensure that the desired outcomes were achieved in the prescribed form, so that they could continue to draw down funds for the government. As with other similar cases, it is the professionals at the frontline who are left to implement the consequences so that teachers of adult literacy focus more on assessment rather than the learning of their students. Little wonder they feel that the assessment regime limits their ability to carry out their functions effectively.

Another significant factor explaining this inclination for imposing tests is that the LSC inherited a lot in terms of perceptions and processes from the defunct TECS. As Lavender et al. (2004) note:

'The LSC has a remit across the range of workplace, college and community further education... its staff was drawn disproportionately from the Training and Enterprise Councils it succeeded... Identifying and achieving targets was central to their business: the nuances of successful strategies for widening participation perhaps less so' (ibid: 1-2).

While the TECS were always more concerned about standards and qualifications as the measurement of skills, the Moser Committee shared a similar view of education as a tool for upgrading skills. So, the prominence of assessment is not accidental. Rather, it is a product of a conscious decision to use qualifications as a measure of learning and skills development. In their

pronouncements, many government agencies responsible for the implementation of the SfL agenda reiterate this point. In the revised national strategy for the delivery of the SfL agenda, DFES (2003), it was made clear that the focus of the strategy is essentially qualifications rather than participation and emancipation. In the document, the government notes:

'Our goal is to reduce the number of adults with literacy, language and numeracy difficulties to the level of our main international competitors... we aim to help 750,000 adults achieve national certificates by 2004, and to help 1.5 million achieve the same by 2007' (ibid: section 5).

This declaration echoes the theme of international competitiveness that was identified as one of the more significant factors influencing decision-making in the Moser committee. The proliferation of tests is therefore not something that developed outside of the dominant discourses of the Moser committee, but was one of its extensions.

In the same document (ibid), the government shed further light on its aim in terms of implementing the SfL agenda and provided an explanation for the prominence of tests and qualifications. It declared (ibid: section 12)

'It is not enough just to help them reach the level of functional literacy, language and numeracy. Our strategy aims to improve their skills up to and including level 2 of the national Qualifications Framework, whether they choose to follow programmes leading to qualifications in literacy or numeracy or key skills'.

This government focus on qualifications to evidence training appears to be a response to the drive for competitiveness in Europe using the framework provided by the highly influential IALS/OECD survey and is a demonstration of the traditional perception of literacy, towards which the government is inclined.

The one standard instrument through which these perceptions can be demonstrated is qualifications. In order to provide evidence of development and in order to justify the financial outlay on literacy, which is one of the hallmarks of traditional/cognitive perception of literacy, it was perhaps necessary for the government to ensure that features that are recognised within the framework of the perception of literacy that generated its evidence like certification, be given a pride of place.

Perhaps most important is the link between public funding of provision and assessment. The Moser Committee in its recommendations gave an indication that it recognised that giving such prominence to assessment might constitute some danger when it noted:

'All methods of assessment are open to abuse and some have been abused in the past. The funding methodology of various funding bodies has over encouraged programme providers to get people through qualifications' (Moser 1999: 68).

In spite of this, it went ahead to empower funders and prepare the ground for assessment to become the main focus of literacy provision when it recommended that, 'Only basic skills qualifications based on this new curriculum should be funded from the public funds' (ibid: 69). While it is true that this assertion does not necessarily mean that only qualification bearing study will be supported, the fact that the achievement of qualifications attracts funding is likely to induce providers to adhere strictly to studies that are linked to the approved qualifications. For government agencies, therefore, this was setting the stage for their imposition of an assessment regime on the provision of literacy which, according to practitioners, has stifled teaching and learning

according to the needs of learners. As noted by Lavender et al (2004:1) this set the scene for a shift to an ideology of 'privileging the needs of the provider over those of learners'. It is therefore not surprising that assessment was one of the most contested issues in the committee and evidence from members of the committee interviewed suggested that it was the defining point between the two dominant views represented in the committee. While the hard core 'economicists' tended to see assessment and qualifications as the lynch pin of achievement and success of literacy study, the proponents of empowerment and widening participation felt that the imposition of assessment and qualifications was an unnecessary burden on adult literacy learners. It is in this context that some of the responses from interviewees analysed in Chapter Six become more relevant.

Interviewee 2 set the scene for this claim when highlighting some of the foci of the committee's deliberations in the context of the claim of a pre-determined agenda in the following words. 'A lot of discussion was about issues of testing and certification which again people felt was too dominant an issue, but you know that is the way it went'. Interviewee 3 highlighted the contentious nature of the issue of assessment and certification in the deliberation of the committee claiming in the response below that, the prominence given to assessment in the strategy might in fact be a manifestation of the influence of an 'economist' ideology within the committee:

'And so the economic argument was really important, it was part of the template of a lot of people on the committee. Y, for example, certainly saw a basis for part of the thing at work to be tied into this. And that led to a lot of arguments in the committee,

about whether in effect unemployment benefits has a compulsory you know, literacy and numeracy test`.

Similar sentiments were expressed by interviewee 1 who said;

`Unfortunately, we started to talk about the issue of qualifications for students. And it was absolutely my opinion that there was no need for a qualification for students... And some practitioners agreed with it and others didn't.

What we can deduce from the quotes above is that members of the committee who wanted assessments imposed succeeded while those who opposed it failed. More importantly, there appears to be a strong link between the assessment and economic arguments. Perhaps from the view of the proponents of assessment, qualification equates to more skill and indirectly, to higher levels of productivity. The other possible argument is that the label of qualification was seen as the ultimate tool for reducing the number of people on income support. As suggested by the penultimate respondent quoted above, there was a move towards making literacy tests mandatory for those who claim income support. It is only a short step from insisting that all benefit claimants must have a particular level of literacy, which must be certificated.

The other element of the findings from practitioners in terms of assessment relates to the nature of the assessments themselves. All the assessments leading to qualifications are developed by a number of existing awarding bodies and validated / approved by the QCA. However, these assessments, according to practitioners, do not in any way measure learning. Illustrating this is the City and Guild assessment for literacy at levels 1 and 2, which is a multiple choice exercise and based on the traditional components of grammar and comprehension. As pointed out by practitioners, these do not really

measure literacy. Rather, the driving forces behind the development of these assessments are the need for standardisation and the desire to measure achievement in a particular way. As noted by Lavender et al (2004:12) the assessment exercises are designed in the way they are because they provide quantifiable data on progress for the government. The form of the assessment itself provides simple measures of achievement for providers and funders because it focuses on easily testable skills to the detriment of not as easily assessed skills. But as Lavender et al (2004), drawing from Handy (1994:219), warn, ‘The fourth (*option*) is to say that what can’t be measured easily really doesn’t exist. This is suicide’. It would seem that it is this suicidal path that the implementation of the SfL agenda has opted to follow in many colleges.

7.3. Practitioners’ perception of the Curriculum

One of the central recommendations of the Moser committee was the development of a national core curriculum for adult literacy. It is the implementation of this recommendation that had the most impact on practitioners. The SfL strategy stipulates that courses in the field of adult literacy must be informed by the core curriculum. Hence, schemes of work, lesson plans and resources are all shaped by the core curriculum. It is therefore important to look at practitioners’ perception of this tool.

7.3.1. Summary of Findings

Element of strategy	Summary of findings
Practitioners’ perception	(1) 85% of respondents (55) saw the curriculum as rigid and providing less

of the adult literacy curriculum	<p>flexibility when compared to what existed before its advent.</p> <p>(2) 77% of respondents (50) reported the curriculum as modelled on skills and competence structures, which does not fully represent literacy learning and use.</p> <p>(3) 31% of respondents (20) identified the contradiction between the nature of the curriculum and the claim of contextualisation within the policy.</p> <p>(4) 62% of respondents (40) made comments to the effect that the curriculum is very detailed, useful and targets many useful points of grammar.</p>
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7.3.2. Discussion

Responses on the nature and impact of the curriculum can be viewed from two perspectives. For those who view the impact negatively, the focus of their resentment was on its rigid and non-contextualised structure, as well as its perceived slant towards a skills and competence model. There were, however, responses which acknowledged the importance of its detailed contents and their focus. Comments representing the former viewpoint included the following ‘The curriculum is too prescriptive and more concerned with grammar and such topics than actual literacy in use’ (Respondent 44 group 3). ‘ The content of the curriculum does not show an understanding of what literacy might be for many learners. It is a product of a deficit view of literacy’ (Respondent 31 group 3). ‘The curriculum doesn’t allow a lot of flexibility. Many people say it does, but I can’t see it’ (Respondent 39 group 3). Representing the other view are comments such as: ‘Very detailed and extremely useful document’ (Respondent 6 group 3), ‘Tells you what to do

and how to do it` (Respondent 30 group 3), and `I have found the curriculum to be useful and very detailed document, which covers everything that I should and might want to teach` (Respondent 22 group 3).

It is clear from these responses that practitioners saw the curriculum in different lights. Unlike many of the issues explored before, the variety in the range of opinions appears to be widespread. While as much as sixty two percent of respondents (40) had positive comments on it, as few as thirty one percent of respondents (20) commented negatively about it. However, responses were not mutually exclusive, as many respondents had both negative and positive comments. What follows is an attempt to tease out a link between these responses and the themes identified in Chapter Six as emanating from the policy development team.

The national core curriculum as an element of the SfL strategy is informed largely by a drive towards standardisation of delivery. The expectation is that all providers will be guided by the stipulation of such a curriculum. In the report of the Moser working committee (1999:64) it is noted that the goal of a new curriculum is to ensure:

`clarity about the skills, knowledge and understanding that anyone needs to be literate and numerate in the modern world. These skills need to be enshrined in a new curriculum, with well developed and understood standards`.

The very notion of standards draws attention to two facts. The first relates to the importance attached to standard by the ethos of vocationalisation that was embraced by the working committee and complemented in its implementation

through the legacy of the defunct TECs whose members of staff were disproportionately represented in the agencies that played significant roles in the implementation of the policy. Secondly, the drive for measurable standards suggests that the curriculum needs to be structured in a way enabling the standards to be clearly identified and measurable. This is why some practitioners see the curriculum as rigid and lacking flexibility. Flexibility, by its very nature, goes counter to the notion of standards. Creating a curriculum that permits flexibility would on the one hand, eliminate the element of standardisation, as it might encourage different interpretations and applications, and on the other hand, prevent measurability. It is therefore not surprising that many practitioners see the document as too rigid. In another sense, the rigidity prescribed by the curriculum provides evidence of the elimination of contextualisation of learning and the elimination of the perception of literacy as social practice. In this respect, therefore, the curriculum itself could be seen as reflecting the framework of traditional/cognitive perception of literacy.

Another reason why the curriculum is so rigid is the way policy-makers equated adult learning with school learning. While making a case for a standard curriculum, the policy document (Moser 1999:64) notes that, the field of adult literacy pre-the core curriculum was by comparison 'somewhat like ... schools, before the introduction of the national curriculum'. Based on the experience of introducing a centralised curriculum for schools, it argues that: 'What is needed is a curriculum which makes clear what specific skills need to be learnt and taught'. What such a stance does is to eliminate the

notion of individual needs and to assume a one-size-fits all curriculum. Paradoxically, the same document acknowledges the difference between adult and school learning in a very limited way:

'There are major differences between curricula for adults and children. ... in the case of adults, the background and starting point is a key factor. Adults bring differing experience and knowledge to the process of learning and study' (ibid: 65).

What appears to have been overlooked is the differing nature of the needs and goals of adults, which a core curriculum cannot even begin to factor in. As a result, practitioners concerned about meeting the needs of their adult learners inevitably find a document such as the core curriculum rigid and inflexible. In spite of its limited recognition of the difference between adults and children in learning, the policy persists in demanding a standardised core curriculum, which is not only imposed, but functions as the first measure of providers' suitability for funding. This, in effect, signals the end of the recognition of the individual needs of the learners and heralds the promotion of meeting the needs of funders and providers.

Practitioners' perceptions of the curriculum suggested that it was rigid and mono-directional because it focuses substantially on traditional grammar and language elements. These foci are themselves reflective of an inclination towards the traditional/cognitive paradigm of literacy. It ignores the possibility that literacy does not necessarily have to focus on these traditional issues and that literacy can be viewed from a different perspective, as has been argued in the literature (see e.g. Barton 1994, Barton and Hamilton 2000 and Street 1984 and 1995). As such, the curriculum is focused on elements of traditional

grammar. A literacy curriculum that is informed by the factors identified above is likely to be rigid and inflexible to practitioners who recognise the virtues of a social construct of literacy.

It is important to acknowledge that some practitioners found the curriculum useful and detailed. For respondents in this category, the common reason for this perception was the point that the curriculum focuses on language and grammar points and provides strict guidelines for teachers. This divergence in perception could be seen as reflecting the divergence among practitioners in terms of their paradigmatic allegiances. It would seem that while some practitioners are inclined towards the social model of literacy, others hold to the traditional/cognitive model of literacy. For those in the latter category, it is inevitable that a structured curriculum with a focus on technical grammar points will be a very useful tool. On the other hand, those in the former category will consider that a tool such as the core curriculum does not really address literacy because literacy for them has a social ramification that transcends mere grammar to capture various social contexts in which literacy is employed.

7.4. Practitioners' perceptions of the dominant paradigm of literacy

Differences in the perceptions about literacy have been identified as one of the factors that have played a key role in the evolution of policy in the field of adult literacy. It is therefore important to see if this differing perception of literacy had any impact on the practitioners surveyed and whether they had

been able to integrate their views into the framework of literacy policy, regardless of points of convergence and divergence between their own perceptions of literacy and those inherent in policy.

7.4.1. Summary of Findings

Element of strategy	Summary of findings
Perception on dominant paradigm of literacy	<p>(1) 75.4% of respondents (49) had limited or little awareness of paradigms of literacy and therefore have no contributions to this issue.</p> <p>(2) 24.6% of respondents (all respondents familiar with literacy paradigms) (16) felt that the traditional paradigm of literacy or its variants underpins the SfL policy and its implementation as manifested in the curriculum.</p> <p>(3) 20% of respondents (81% of those familiar with literacy paradigms) (13) acknowledged the social literacy model as the most desirable.</p> <p>(4) 4.61 % of respondents (3) acknowledged the critical literacy model as the most desirable.</p> <p>(5) All of the respondents who acknowledged allegiance to literacy paradigms claimed that they have continued to work within the framework of literacy paradigms they disagree with.</p>

7.4.2. Discussion

The post-Moser UK literacy curriculum and the policy that generated it have been shown to be shaped by a traditional/cognitive model of literacy. The fact that practitioners were able to identify this underpinning paradigm of literacy as the one that informed the policy and curriculum through which their work was done demonstrates its all-pervasive nature. It is evident that the structure

that is visible at the users' end has its origin at the level of policy making. As discussed in chapter 6, the recognition of the IALS/OECD data and the alignment to a standard of literacy that focused on traditional concepts of grammar are both indications that the policy is derived from a traditional/cognitive model of literacy viewpoint. What the practitioner respondents have therefore picked up is the residue of the traditional/cognitive model of literacy ethos, which now impacts directly on their practice through an imposed policy and curriculum.

It is fair, however, to explore the extent to which practitioners have been left the room to manoeuvre within the framework of the perceived overarching paradigm of literacy. Are practitioners able to find creative ways of staying true to their own perceptions in spite of the dictates of policy makers and management? This is important because it allows us to compare the response of contemporary practitioners to that of practitioners in the 1970s, some of who found a way of keeping their perspectives. Evidence from the group of participants in this study suggests that there is little of such manoeuvres. Why this is so, it is difficult to say. However, it might well be that the contemporary regime of control is by far more powerful in some places. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence suggests that some practitioners have been able to keep their perspectives and to find creative ways of accommodating seemingly conflicting perspectives. Herrington's (2004) description of 'creative practitioners' probably refers to this group of practitioners. Similarly, evidence from developments in the post-Moser years suggests that some practitioners continue to find room to manoeuvre. The works reported, for example, in

Manion, Ivanic, and the Literacies for Learning in Further Education Research Group (2007), Ivanic, & Tseng, (2005) and Howard (2006) provide illustrations of how this manoeuvre and accommodation has been achieved both in theory and practice. Similarly, initiatives like the Pathfinder programmes (Read plus Write 2003) are also indication that both individuals and organisations have sometimes found ways of manoeuvring within the dictates of policy.

Another factor emerging from the findings here is the imposition of political ideology on curriculum development. From the responses of practitioners, it is obvious that they had little or no say in the identification of the most suitable paradigms. As established in Chapter Six of this study, there was very little input from practitioners of literacy in the Moser committee, as evidenced by the composition of the policy making committee. What this implies is that decisions on the theoretical underpinnings of literacy policy are typically resolved from the viewpoint of non-practitioners. It would seem that this was the case in the development of the Moser adult literacy policy.

The established alignment of policy and practice to the traditional/ cognitive model of literacy raises the issue of internal and moral conflict for practitioners who have allegiances to other models of literacy. As noted by Herrington (2004) and Street (1984), practitioners are usually faced with this type of conflict as they are often compelled to operate within the framework of theoretical positions to which they object. Harris (1997) highlights the irreconcilable nature of this conflict in his debate on the viability of a core

curriculum. He argues that 'it seems... unlikely that there could ever be a satisfactory outcome' to endeavours of those who are 'trying to devise a core curriculum which would be acceptable to both governments and teachers' and which might even 'try to take into account the needs of pupils as well' (p.50). For Harris, 'questions about the curriculum are inseparable from questions about educational ideology' (ibid). What is therefore reflected in practice and identified by practitioners are vestiges of the educational ideology that underpins the policy development, which in Harris' views are also informed by 'political pressure'

What is important about this configuration is the sheer pressure that it puts on practitioners. When a policy like the SfL agenda and the tools of implementation like the curriculum are informed by an ideology that the practitioners do not subscribe to, the ensuing moral conflict leaves the practitioners restricted both in their commitment and in their ability to execute their duties. In effect, this type of situation breeds a lethargic workforce. In many situations, this is the direct impact of the imposition of policy and tools informed by a theoretical base that appears to be whole-heartedly accepted by the policy makers, but reluctantly acquiesced to by the practitioners.

Finally, the revelation that many practitioners have limited knowledge of paradigmatic options in the field of literacy is significant because it raises issues about the level of exposure and training of literacy tutors, and inevitably has implications for the teacher training curriculum in the subject area. In terms of the implementation of the SfL agenda, it might well be that a

work force that is thus limited is most suitable for providers, management and policy watchdog in the area of adult literacy. There is the possibility that there is a drive towards recruiting and empowering practitioners who hold no ideological or political views where adult literacy is concerned. This might well be the explanation for the sizable representation of practitioners with limited knowledge of paradigms of literacy in the workforce.

7.5. Perceptions of practitioners on the impact of policy on learners

In this section, responses in respect of how practitioners feel that the implementation of policy has impacted on their learners are analysed. Learners’ views have not been sought, as the focus of the study is on policy and its impact on practice. Therefore, the responses discussed here can be considered as secondary data presented through the prism of primary participants.

7.5.1. Summary of findings

Element of strategy	Summary of findings
Impact of policy on learners	<div>58% of respondents (38) claimed that their learners feel frustrated as they are unable to focus on what really interests them.</div> <div>55% of respondents (36) claimed that many learners resent the imposition of assessments on them.</div> <div>46% of respondents (30) felt that for many learners, both short-term and long-term needs are not met.</div> <div>51% of respondents (33) felt that many learners resent the fact that they are</div>

	<p>compelled to study numeracy and ICT when all they wanted is literacy.</p> <p>50% of respondents (32) felt that some learners are immensely proud of their achievements, particularly when they get certificates</p>
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7.5.2. Discussion

The first three findings above can be summarised under the position that learners generally do not feel that their needs are met on adult literacy courses. This manifests in a variety of ways including imposition of assessment, curriculum content and decisions on what to study. As has been argued in the literature, educational policy appears to have shifted from a focus on learners’ needs to a focus on providers’ needs. (see e.g. Lavender et al. 2004; Harris 2006; Allen and Ainley 2007; and Allen 2007). Providers must be seen in the larger context, which includes government and its regulatory agents, and not just in the context of the institution where these courses are provided. In the discussion on the influential ideological and political factors informing the development of the Moser committee’s strategy for SfL, it was argued in Chapter Six that educational policy in Britain since the late 1990s has been influenced by the ideology of education as the solution to all social problems. In the prevalent context, the overarching social ills are the combinations of skills shortage, unemployment and the limitation in competition with countries of similar status internationally. These perceptions, it was argued, were transferred into the process of adult literacy policy making in the context of the Moser Committee. Based on this, the needs of the policy making body, which although represented by the Moser committee, is in fact

the government, is to ensure that all the ills above are addressed and remedied. As suggested, some of the ways these needs could be addressed include ensuring that more and more people are labelled as skilled on the basis of qualifications. Programmes are structured in a way that might help employers of labour rather than learners, while training programmes assume vocational dimensions in order that the unemployment crisis might be addressed.

In this context, the perceptions of practitioners in terms of the views of learners are not surprising. They reflect the conflict between the learners' perception of their needs, and the providers' perception of their own needs. It is therefore inevitable that there will be some form of conflict between the two perceptions because many learners in the adult literacy field are adults and are able to identify their own needs. Unfortunately, the winner is also inevitable, as it is he who pays the piper that dictates the tune.

7.6. Summary

In this chapter, the views of practitioners on policy and the ways in which the implementation of policy had impacted on their practice is explored. Following the analysis of the findings from practitioners, it was established that in the implementation of practice, substantial elements of the underpinning ideology and themes that governed the development of policy were carried over into, policy implementation. It was also evident that as it is sometimes the case with policy making, the needs of providers/funders and policy makers take precedence over the needs of learners. This chapter therefore supports the

hypothesis that as adult literacy policy continued to evolve, the influential factors in its formation were more dictated by the perceived needs of policy makers than by the needs of learners.

Chapter 8: Conclusion, Recommendations and Issues for Professional Development

8.1 Conclusion

This study of policy formation and implementation has traced the evolution of policy in the field of adult literacy from the 1970s to the Moser Committee Report and has established that significant factors at play in the evolution of policy in the field have been constructed in the context of prevalent and contemporary socio-political issues and events. The thesis found that the significant factors in the evolution of policy kept step with overarching educational policy ideologies and consistently drew from them. This confirms three of the hypotheses underlying this study, namely: (a) that the evolution of policy in the adult literacy field has been significantly informed by a range of factors, (b) that many of these factors are not directly related to education, and (c) that the pattern of overall educational policy ideology is reflected in the evolution of adult literacy policy.

This research has contributed to knowledge through an illustration of the viability of a process approach to policy discourse. This approach focuses on the cognition and contribution of participants in a policy-making event, rather than on the text of the policy. In the context of the Moser Committee, this is a novel approach towards the analysis of the policy. Using the contributions and responses of participants, this study has trialled a process which allows elements of individual cognition to be confirmed or validated by other participants and through documentary sources. In the context of literacy policy, this signalled a departure from the hitherto established analysis of policy product (See e.g. Fowler 2005, Hamilton and Hillier). In order to achieve the above, the study employed a convergence model which created a

framework for utilising tools and principles from a range of theories and approaches within the structure of the same research on the basis of their mutual compatibility and convergence with the goals of the research. It is, therefore, an illustration of how these varied but related principles, tools and elements of theory can be fruitfully utilised at all stages of a research work.

The significant factors affecting adult literacy policy identified in this study include the themes of entitlement and social responsibility, the economy, international competitiveness, the labour market and the skills agenda, all of which were introduced through the socio-cognitive realities of a range of actors in the policy development process. The central theme emerging from the research is the change in the perception of the government and policy makers about the role of education. In the context of adult literacy policy evolution, this perception changed from a focus on the needs of learners to a focus on the needs of policy makers, the labour market and, indirectly, the economy. The evolution of policy in adult literacy has thus been shaped by a metamorphosis in the perception of literacy as a symptom of social dysfunction to a perception of literacy as the cause and cure for social dysfunction. Developing from this, arguments about educational and social needs of learners have been subdued while arguments about the economy, international competitiveness and the labour market have been in the ascendancy. This trend is associated with the prevalent government ideology, which ultimately has dictated overall educational policy in general but literacy policy in particular. The ascendancy of these non-educational factors has impacted not only on policy but also on practice. Data collected for this

research confirmed that, in the perception of practitioners, this pattern of policy has adversely affected practice, in regards to meeting the needs of learners.

These findings corroborate the views of commentators who have suggested that adult literacy policy has not addressed what it purported to address and that many of the claims of the government should not, and cannot, be taken at face value. For instance, Alan Wells, who was the director of the BSA at the time of the Moser committee, drew attention to the misrepresentation that a focus on qualifications gives in the context of addressing progress made under the SfL agenda, particularly where the real beneficiaries are concerned. Citing a National Audit Office report, he observed that although one of the key targets of the SfL agenda is to 'increase the number of adults with skills required for employability', the actual method of collecting the data 'is not fit for purpose', as the emphasis has been on 'counting qualifications' rather than on 'beneficiaries' (Wells 2006). This, for him, echoes a suggestion in the Leitch Report that 'population surveys should replace the counting of qualifications gained to assess progress' as this might 'temper the atmosphere of self-congratulation that surrounds Skills for Life' (ibid).

Similar inadequacies were highlighted by Kingston (2006) in respect of the data and targets used by government and adult literacy policy makers and the questionable nature of the data upon which they rely. He agreed with the former head of BSA that, 'it is in the government interest to paint the problem big, to move the goal post as far as possible in its Skills for Life strategy,

because it makes targets much easier to hit' (ibid). Even more damning is the observation that the SfL agenda depends to a large extent on 'cross-referencing adult qualifications with key stages in schools'. According to Kingston, the head of the BSA feels that the crucial question of how many of the total 100,000 people who are recorded as having gained qualifications through SfL had literacy problems in the first place is yet to be answered. This reiterates the conclusions drawn by the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons that, 'There is a risk of "mission drift" because although 'The Skills for Life strategy is intended to meet the needs of adults', it would seem that 'a large proportion of its resources are taken up by recent school leavers who might reasonably be expected to gain their qualifications at school' (ibid).

The scepticism reflected in these views corroborates the evidence in this research that the policy has as its target, first and foremost, skills as measured by qualifications and their contribution to labour force competitiveness. It is therefore not surprising that so much attention is focused on young adults rather than 'the real adults' who might genuinely need to improve their literacy. It is more a focus on who can be more useful in the labour market and who is more likely to achieve qualifications that might bolster the statistics.

The conclusions arrived at in this study validate the arguments of curriculum and policy theorists who cite factors like 'social stratification, job opportunities' (Stone1969:70), 'material production, ideological values, class relations, and

structures of social power...as well as politico-economic' (Apple, 1979:1 and Lazere 1977:755), 'conscious cultural tradition and educational ideology' (Grafton and Jardine, 1986:219) and 'structure and trends subsumed by the cultural, political and philosophical' (Houston 2002: vii) as significant in curriculum policy development. The works cited above have therefore provided an anchor for the findings of this study.

The findings also corroborate existing positions in public policy theory. For example, Torres (2004:15) identifies, alongside 'internal determinants of educational policy', the 'environmental determinants of policy' which include 'economic factors, physical environment, and social and demographic environment' and 'political system determinants'. The message from this framework is simply that education policies are not merely matters for education but are also conditioned by non-educational factors.

In summary, the message to be taken forward from this research tallies with that offered by Torres (2004) that inquiry about policy formation must be carried out in the light of a number of dimensions:

'The main actors of policy formation including the bureaucracy, administrative agents and social constituencies and clienteles, inputs in terms of processes of transformation and outputs, the stages and units of policy formation, the intellectual, institutional and ideological atmosphere where the policy framework decisions are made must all be considered' (p.15).

These are the various dimensions that this research has explored in the study of the evolution of adult literacy policy and practice.

It is important to highlight the overall conclusion of this research that adult literacy policy has been influenced by the government's perception of real and imaginary threats to the state and that this policy approach converges with an existing theoretical position. In particular, there is a link between this conclusion and one of the hypotheses put forward by Torres (2004) in his analysis of public policy formation: policy formation is sometimes a 'response or anticipation to social threats' (ibid: 161). This research through its insight into policy formation and implementation provides evidence to substantiate this hypothesis.

Ex Post Facto Considerations

Cohen et al (2000) talk of what they call 'Ex Post Facto Research' (p.205), a term they use to refer to developments after a particular event or a specified period of time that has been the focus of a research activity. According to them, ex post facto literally means 'what was done afterwards' (ibid). Because the present research not only looks at the recommendations of the Moser committee, but also the way in which they have impacted on practice, it is important that we highlight briefly that there have been developments since the recommendations were made. It is, therefore, important to highlight here that the findings of the research does not fully represent what has transpired in the field in terms of policy development and implementation. Indeed, there have been a number of developments in response to the Moser Committee, which have mediated the recommendations of the Moser Committee's recommendations in the process of operationalisation. This illustrates the process of textual recreation described in Street (1984) on how both written

and oral literacy can be mediated from one stage to another. In the context of SfL, therefore, it is important that we make some references to the developments that followed the publication of the Moser Report in 1999, as some of them have significant impact on practice. Two of the most important of these developments are the SfL strategy and the revised strategy of (2000) and (2004) respectively. In my view, these documents reflect two patterns of responding to the Moser recommendations as explored below.

The first pattern of response demonstrates a process of mediation where the original values of the published Moser recommendations have been strictly adhered to. Demonstrating these are some of the elements of the SfL strategies highlighted below. In the SfL strategy, the foreword by the then Secretary of State, David Blunkett suggests that the argument around which the need to develop a literacy strategy is woven is still based on the deficit model of literacy. This view is embodied in the claim about poor literacy that, 'The cost to the country as a whole could be as high as £10 Billion a year' (p1). In effect, this claim provides an indication that the economic argument is as strong in the framework of developing this strategy as it was in the context of the Moser committee itself. Recognition of the related employment and international competitiveness arguments is reflected in the same document which asserts that, 'The effect of reduced literacy and numeracy skills on individuals is severe, but there is a cost to society which is just as great. Employers in particular cannot compete in an increasingly global, knowledge-based economy...' (p.4). It goes further to assert that 'Industry loses an

estimated £4.8 Billion a year because of poor literacy and numeracy skills' (ibid).

Other areas in which the SfL strategy provides evidence of its adherence to the values imbued in the recommendations of the Moser Committee include its declaration that it will continue with a strategy that 'will build on the numeracy and literacy school strategy (pg 5), the goal of holding on to the notion of standards highlighted in the Moser recommendations through the 'Establishing robust national standards, screening and diagnostic assessment, a national core curriculum and new national tests ...' (pg 5) and the promotion of a monitoring regime through the LSC which in addition to planning and funding 'majority of literacy and numeracy provision' (pg 25), 'will monitor progress against the national targets and will establish its own basic skills targets...' (pg.25). Furthermore, there is a demonstration of an adherence to the recommendations of the Moser Committee in the area of standards which is linked to assessment, as 'The government has taken action, through the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, to establish a set of national standards which will provide the framework for all adult literacy and numeracy qualifications and programmes' (pg. 30) and in the area of quality assurance which echoes the recommendations of the Moser Committee significantly (Pg 34).

The adherence of the mediating agents to some of the cited elements of the Moser recommendations can be seen as the reason for the perceptions of practitioners in respect of some of the aspects of the SfL strategy. In

particular, issues around assessment, qualifications, quality and monitoring, as well as meeting the empowerment needs of learners could be accounted for by this factor. The National Audit office (NAO 2004) in its scrutiny of the implementation of the strategy recognises some of these issues. For example, it notes among areas where progress needs to be made the fact that, 'More than half of the qualifications counting towards the July 2004 were gained by 16 to 18 year olds' (pg. 8). This corroborates the claims of practitioners in chapter 7 that many colleges are driven by the need to recruit those who can help them meet their qualification targets to the detriment of needy adult learners. It is therefore not surprising that (NAO 2004:8) recommends that 'Larger numbers of older adults with low skills need to be encouraged into learning'. Providing a hint that there is still a preponderance of the employment factor, the NAO (2004) notes in its comments about Jobcentre plus, an organisation which plays a very significant role in the funding of literacy that, 'Jobcentre plus' primary objective is to help people into work, though it funds literacy and numeracy learning as one element of training aimed at getting people into work` (pg. 9). This again provides an explanation of the inclination towards the haphazard way of recruiting learners to literacy courses and the lack of commitment by many learners which was noted by practitioners in chapter 7.

In spite of the seeming adherence to the perceived ethos of the Moser recommendations, there is evidence that subsequent developments like the SfL strategy found ways of deviating from the recommendations of the Moser Committee. In many cases, this deviation appeared to have enabled the

empowerment and widening participation arguments to substantially come to the fore. Central to this perception is the fact that the element of consultation with practitioners which was essentially lacking in the procedures of the Moser Committee was included in the development of the strategy. Ade-Ojo (2002 and 2004) provided evidence through participants' research that the process of consultation took place even if it was limited. Also, in the policy document, *The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and numeracy Skills* (2000), evidence is provided that at least 208 practitioners were consulted in the process of developing the strategy (ibid:37). This shows a mediation of policy at this stage leading to a change from the principles driving the recommendation to a new regime of consultation.

Another aspect in which the recommendations of the Moser Committee appears to have been changed in the process of operationalising it is in the scope and coverage of prioritised groups considered to be needy. While the dominant consideration in the Moser Committee appeared to have been those not in employment, the strategy expanded this scope to include: 'Unemployed people, prisoners and those supervised in the community, public sector employees, low skilled people in employment and other groups at risk of exclusion' (ibid: 3). In effect, these changes confirm that the mediating body created an avenue for the empowerment factor to come into prominence.

Taking the factor of empowerment further, the document notes that:

'We cannot ignore other groups with specific disadvantage and at the risk of exclusion from mainstream society due to lack of literacy and numeracy skills. These include homeless people, those with drug and alcohol problems, refugees and other non-native speakers, and some who live in disadvantaged communities' (p.7).

This modification, it can be argued, is responsible for the inclusion of ESOL and people with learning difficulties and their attendant curriculum, ESOL national core curriculum and Access for all respectively, in the SfL policy. More importantly, this modification helped to reinforce the factors of empowerment and widening participation which hitherto appeared to have been silenced.

While the above is not in anyway exhaustive, it provides an illustration of how policy might be mediated and modified as it moves from stage to stage and confirms that the SfL strategy has gone through this process. The result of such mediation, as illustrated above, can either lead to a reaffirmation of the base policy arguments or to the introduction of alternative arguments. In the case of the SfL policy, it would seem that both possibilities manifested themselves.

8.2. Recommendations.

8.2.1: Towards a functional New Literacies curriculum: Literacy for specific purposes.

The recommendations made here derive purely from aspects of the research and are presented in terms of relevance to different actors in policy formation and implementation. One of the findings of this research from the perception of practitioners is the gap between their perception of literacy and that of the government and policy makers which needs to be bridged. Street (2008) in his review of Campbell's book, *Measure of Success; Assessment and Accountability in Adult Basic Education* observed that:

'however positive individuals' experience might have been, and however exciting their ideas, the wider world-and in particular funders and policy-makers- have insisted that innovations be subject to measures of success to determine that they are "effective" and accountable' (P.28).

Suggesting that all is not lost for the innovative practitioner, however, Street noted that, 'there are realistic accounts of how such programmes (innovative) might be 'subjected to measures that ensure their accountability both to the participants and to the people who pay' (ibid)

It is safe to assume that the condition of accountability and measurement will continue to be prominent in education. But as Street suggested, the challenge for practitioners will continue to be how to subject innovations to 'measures that ensure accountability'. It was evident from this research that while many practitioners subscribed to the innovation inherent in New Literacies, they acquiesced in the imposition of the traditional/ cognitive model, and so continued to perpetuate its dominance. The challenge, in my view, is how practitioners can facilitate the development of a curriculum governed by the dictates of New Literacies in a measurable and accountable form. While both the government and many funders have remained firm in their views about accountability and measurement of literacy provision, researchers and practitioners have marginally asserted their claims of the superiority of New Literacies by identifying pockets of practice modelled on New Literacies. The emphasis has been to promote the NLS model as a tool for learning, for instance in Satchwell and Ivanic (2007), rather than making it influential in structuring literacy provision. Within this context, teachers and researchers who have a preference for New Literacies have failed to push their preferred model to the fore by taking responsibility for bridging the gap between policy and research.

Many scholars have recognised the limitations of implementing the theoretical arguments inherent in the propositions of New Literacy Studies. Brandt and Clinton (2002) have noted what they call 'the limits of the local', while Collins and Blot (2003) decry what they feel might amount to a store of descriptions of local literacies without adequately addressing their implementation in practice. In essence, these scholars warn that New Literacy Studies will remain only in the theoretical sphere forever because of its distinct difference from the model preferred by policy makers and governments.

However, Street (2003: 6) takes a step towards resolving this impasse when he suggests that:

'the next stage of the work in this area is to move beyond these theoretical critiques and to develop positive proposals for interventions in teaching, curriculum measurement criteria, and teacher education'.

In my view, this is the responsibility of teachers and others involved in policy implementation. Although teachers continue to highlight the virtues of the New Literacy Studies and awarding bodies eulogise the merit of meeting the needs of individual learners, very little has been done to introduce this model into their work. This is in spite of a range of research by specialists and practitioners which has provided evidence confirming its virtues. For instance, Manion and Ivanic (2007) carried out a study mapping the non-formally recognised aspects of literacy use by FE students. Through the prism of policy formation, Howard (2006) again draws our attention to the importance of a Social Practice view of literacy. In spite of these frequent allusions to the virtues of New Literacies as a medium, very little has been done to help

establish a New Literacies informed content as a domain of literacy studies. In my opinion, this should be a basis for fashioning a framework that will help to formally integrate the framework of New Literacy Studies in adult literacy education. **It is on the basis of this that I propose a framework that should encourage teachers and awarding bodies: Literacy for specific purposes.**

8.2.2. Recommendation for teachers

Literacy teachers should transfer their recognition of the virtues of the New Literacy Studies model into developing literacy curricula for specific purposes.

Responses from practitioners suggest that many felt that their students' preferences were not met through the present structure and content of literacy courses (See Chapter 7). One way that practitioners can respond to this is by drawing from the principles of New Literacies to create literacy domains which recognise the specifically social nature of different educational and vocational purposes for which literacy can be utilised. Such an approach would focus on the specific literacy needs of different academic and vocational areas and avoid the imposition of the so-called 'standard elements' of literacy. Many literacy teachers in the wake of what is called embedded literacy have focused on teaching students who are involved in studying different vocational subjects. Such teachers should develop a specific curriculum for these courses in such a way that it would be acceptable to both governments and mediators. The key point here is that such a curriculum should leave room for the government to continue to measure the progress of learners in the

tabulated form it is accustomed to but this should be developed on a template of skills and competencies required for literacy skills in different aspects of life. In this respect, every vocation can be seen as a social aspect of life. There are already pockets of research evidence to support the validity of this approach. For example, Lea and Street (2006) argue for what they call academic literacy, which is underpinned by the perception of reading and writing as social practices that may vary with context. What has not been done is to allocate responsibility for the development and application of these models which can only be the professional responsibility of committed practitioners.

The proposal to develop literacy for specific purpose embodies a drive towards making the principles of New Literacies acceptable and accountable as a viable curriculum area to funders. For practitioners, there are three points that recommend this approach. Firstly, it provides an element of choice, which practitioners have decried as lacking for their learners. Secondly, it provides an opportunity for learners to learn and practise literacy as employed in their preferred social spheres. It therefore conforms to the perception of literacy as a social practice. Finally, this model of literacy provides an opportunity for learners to be motivated, as they see themselves as part of decision-making in terms of the domain and content of literacy programmes. This is likely to engender a feeling of ownership which should contribute to the success of learners.

For funders, this model should have an appeal because it will provide a defined domain of literacy studies which can be measurable and indeed quantifiable. With the support of awarding bodies, the element of achievement and progression can be defined and implemented in a mode that suits the preferred competences model of the funders and governments. This then can be a way of moving from mere 'accounts of the progressive thinking that underpins the best of adult education provision' to a more pragmatic account 'of how such projects might be subjected to measures that ensure accountability both to the participants and the people who pay' (Street 2008:28).

8.2.3. Recommendation for awarding bodies

Awarding bodies need to commission assessment exercises and develop qualifications that will acknowledge learning in this mode by awarding qualifications for achievements in literacy for specific purpose.

One of the reasons why governments have shied away from acknowledging other models of literacy is because they have not been supported by quantifiable awards. Although many awarding bodies have voiced their support for the concept of embedded literacy, none has developed qualifications to evidence literacy learning in this mode. It is therefore not surprising that governments and their monitoring agents are wary of adopting this mode of literacy study. Developing qualifications to evidence literacy learning in this mode will not only attract learners but will also provide avenues for the government to justify resource outlay on these learners.

8.2.4. Recommendation for policy making

Bodies responsible for the development of educational policies should have some representation from the body of practitioners in the field.

Evidence from this research confirms the fact that there was very little input from practitioners into the policy development process of the SfL agenda. This is bound to have an effect on the final policy output. In the context of the development of the SfL agenda, this is particularly surprising because less relevant stakeholders like the Union were represented. As indicated earlier, the subsequent initiative leading to the operationalisation of the Moser recommendations and the creation of the SfL agenda appeared to have carried out a lot more consultation than the committee itself. However, there are limitations to this. Firstly, it would seem that this consultation happened after the event. The present researcher was one of the practitioners that were consulted by the development team for the Core Curriculum working with the DFES and can confirm that the consultation only happened after the draft had been drawn up. This is again corroborated in a previous research on the underpinning values of the Core curriculum (See Ade-Ojo 2002 and 2004). In effect, therefore, there was little that could have been done about what appears to have been determined.

Furthermore, there is an issue about the number of practitioners consulted. In the Skills for Life strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills document (2000), it is stated that only 208 practitioners were consulted on a

range of issues. With a projected 15,000 workforce, it is difficult to see 208 (about 1.3%) as representative of the workforce. Overall, therefore, there is some justification in advocating that there should be wider consultation in future similar events.

Initiate a procedure for developing specialist literacy providers:

In order to avoid duplication of efforts and the over-burdening of literacy teachers, policy makers should develop a framework that would enable literacy providers to become specialists in the areas they consider themselves best equipped. This would enable different providers to specialise in the delivery of specific Literacies and potential trainees to know the providers who have the wherewithal to meet their needs.

8.2.5. Recommendation for Teacher Education

Evidence from this research suggests that some practitioners have limited awareness of the political dimensions of literacy. On the basis of this, it is recommended that: **Teacher education providers need to incorporate topics relating to a critical analysis of models of literacy into their curriculum.** While the existing situation might be desired by policy makers, as it makes for a more pliant workforce, it limits the outlook of practitioners. Although many trainees undergoing training for the new qualifications are likely to be familiar with this topic, many long-term practitioners are not. As it is unlikely that government will fund training events in this area, perhaps this is something for the teachers' unions to get involved with.

8.3. Professional development

I consider the findings of this research relevant to my professional development from two viewpoints. First as a literacy teacher, the gap identified between my perception of literacy and the framework within which I am obliged to work is an issue that I need to address. As recommended in this study, one way in which this could be done is through the development of Literacy for Specific Purposes. Literacy for specific purposes draws from the concept of English for specific purposes (ESP) but differs in terms of the target group and the setting of its practice. According to Dudley-Evans (1997), ESP has the following characteristics: it is defined to meet the specific needs of the learners, it makes use of underlying methodology and activities, and it is centred on the language appropriate to these activities at various levels of language. The Literacy for Specific purposes that I propose here shares the same characteristics. The major difference, however, is that while the ESP model appears to focus on language as a tool for learning in other disciplines, the Literacy for specific purposes model is expected to incorporate language development in the context of work, leisure and studies. This is a reinforcement of the perception of all of these aspects as social practices with education and studies being only one of such aspects. This is a challenge that I intend to meet, not only by developing specific curricula, but also by trialling these curricula with learners. My action plan in this respect will focus essentially on how to identify resources and learners for implementing this model in practice.

My commitment as a practitioner also encompasses my role as a teacher trainer. This research identified a lack of critical awareness on the part of many literacy teachers in terms of their perception of literacy. As a teacher trainer, I would hope to respond to this in two ways. Firstly, I will explore the possibility of developing modules around critical literacy which can be used for gaining qualified teacher status in the Life-Long Learning sector (QTLS) by specialist literacy teachers under the auspices of the Institute for Learning (IFL). Within the structure of these modules, I will explore the development of frameworks for transferring the critical awareness of literacy paradigms into methods and resources used in the teaching of literacy. Secondly, as a teacher trainer, I will explore the development and application of this critical awareness with my trainees. I will seek to develop activities that will enable my trainees to reflect their paradigmatic commitments in the methods, resources and assessment exercises they use in the teaching of literacy. In effect, I will seek to develop methods of raising my trainees' theoretical awareness and for translating this awareness into practice.

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February 2008

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#2 Minutes of BAS meeting of January 31st 1973

#3 Copy of a speech by Micahel Checkland, the BBC Director General. (Undated)

#4 Copy of a report by a BBC research group on the BBC's involvement in Adult Literacy (Undated)

#5. Copy of a letter to Hon. Margaret Thatcher from a BAS project officer

Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to potential respondents to questionnaire sent to practitioners.

Dear colleague/

Adult Literacy policy and practice Research

This questionnaire is designed to contribute to the data for a doctorate degree in Post-compulsory Education at The University of Greenwich. The focus is on the evolution of the *Adult Literacy policy and practice*, with emphasis on the various discourses that may have played significant roles in its evolution and the impact of such discourses on practice. As a practitioner who frequently uses the curriculum, it is important that your views and perceptions are taken into account.

Before asking you to fill out the attached questionnaire, it is important to establish that the following are all guaranteed: all prescribed relationships between the researcher and sources of information, information and anonymity, and the relationship between the information provided and researcher's interpretation.

In addition, the following research norms have been considered, and put in place.

- With your permission, response will be analysed together with responses from other colleagues. However, whatever information is provided through this questionnaire will be held in confidence, and any reference to such information will be anonymous except in cases where respondents specifically request that their names should be associated with particular views. Also, all data collected will be destroyed once the research is concluded and the degree awarded.
- It is recognised that whatever views you express are personal to you and not representative of the views of whatever organisation you are affiliated to, or employed by.
- You have the right to withdraw at any stage in the course of this research.

- If any interpretations were given to information provided by you, they will be explicitly stated as the researcher’s interpretations.
- Finally, I would appreciate a formal confirmation of your willingness to participate in this research using the enclosed consent form.
Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Gordon O. Ade-Ojo
Researcher
Dept of PLD
Maritime Campus
University of Greenwich
London SE 10 9LS
Tel: 0208 3319349

Prof Patrick Ainley
Supervisor
School of E&T
Maritime Campus
University of Greenwich
London SE 10 9LS
Tel: 020 8331 9534

Appendix B: Questionnaire sent to practitioners

A. Practitioner’s background/experience

Name: (optional) -----

Place of work (optional) -----

Gender () Male () Female

(1) How long have you been involved with adult literacy

(2) In what capacity?

(3) Are you familiar with the Skills for life agenda?
Yes/No

(4) If yes, in what capacity?

B. Impact of Policy on practice:

The next series of questions aims at finding out your perception of the impact of the SfL agenda on your practice as an adult literacy teacher. In addition to asking for your overall perception on different elements of the strategy, the questionnaire provides opportunity for you to illustrate with comments. Please note that you are welcome to have divergent views on each element. You might for instance have a view that some of the elements have both positive and negative impacts on your practice.

(1) In your perception, how has the following elements of the strategy impacted on your practice? Please tick and insert comments in the box below each element.

(a) Meeting targets: () positively () Negatively

Comments:

Positive

Negative

(b) Quality and Monitoring regime: () positively () Negatively

Comments:

Positive

Negative

(c) Advice and guidance/Initial assessment: () positively () negatively

Comments:

Positive

Negative

((c) Assessment: () positively () Negatively

Comments:

Positive

Negative

(c) Funding () positively () Negatively

Comments:

Positive

Negative

C. Perception of the Adult Literacy Curriculum

- (1) What is your view about the adult literacy curriculum? Please tick
() useful () Not useful () Both
- (2) Which elements of the curriculum have you found useful/not useful?
Consider elements like the structure, content and relevance. Please
insert comments on each of the elements you consider relevant

- (3) How well does this curriculum meet the needs of your learners?
() Very adequate () Not adequate () Fairly adequate

Comments: Please insert comments relative to your response to the above question:

- (4) Do you feel that this curriculum subscribes to any paradigm/perception of literacy? Yes/No If yes, which paradigm?

D. Perception on dominant paradigm of literacy in the strategy

- (1) Are you familiar with the term literacy paradigms and its import? Please tick.
() yes () No () only minimally
- (2) If your answer to the question above is yes, which paradigms are you aware of? Please list.

- (3) Which paradigm(s) do you think is/are most influential in the SfL strategy?

(4) (4) Which paradigm (s) do you think is/are most influential in your work?

(5) As a practitioner, which paradigm do you see as most useful in your work?

(6) Does this paradigm converge with the influential paradigm in your place of work?

() Yes () No

(7) If no, what have you done/ are you doing about it?

E. Impact of implementing strategy on learners

(1) How do you think the implementation of the strategy has impacted on your learners? Please tick. Note that you could tick more than one.

() Positively () Negatively () both ways

(2) Please identify aspects of your learners' experience that the implementation of the strategy has impacted on. Please use the grid below and include comments on how the strategy has impacted upon your learners' experience.

spect of learners' experience

Comments

Thank you.
Gordon O. Ade-Ojo

Appendix C: Letter to interview subject group of long-term practitioners

Dear interviewee/

This interview is designed to get your insight as a long-term practitioner/researcher in the field into the unheralded factors that are instrumental in the development of the Adult literacy policy.

With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed. However, whatever information is recorded in the course of this interview will be held in confidence, and any reference to such information will be anonymous except in cases where respondents specifically request that their names should be associated with particular views.

It is recognised that whatever views you express is personal to you and not representative of the views of whatever organisation you are affiliated to. Also, you have the right to withdraw at any stage in the course of this research. If any interpretations were given to information provided by you, it would be explicitly stated as interviewer's interpretations and not those of the interviewee.

Finally, I would appreciate a formal confirmation of your willingness to participate in this research using the formal consent form enclosed.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely,

Sincerely,
Gordon O. Ade-Ojo
Researcher
Dept of PLD

Prof Patrick Ainley
Supervisor
School of E&T

Appendix D: Interview schedule for subject group of long-term practitioners

Areas to be explored in the development of literacy policy

- (1) There have been indications that literacy policy in the 70s was predominantly an issue of practice rather than any clear government pronouncement. How would you summarise government policy on literacy development at this time?
- (2) Practitioners in the 70s were predominantly volunteers. What informed their participation?
- (3) What was the pattern of interaction between the various themes in the 70s and 80s.
- (4) Did we have a form of simultaneous influence or was it ordered? I.e., did the various themes operate one at a time, or did they operate all at once?
- (5) What drove the media involvement in the 70s?
- (6) Was there any underpinning philosophy for the involvement of the media?

- (7) 70s and 80s signalled the influx of migrants and the attendant ESOL/EFL learning. Did this have any impact on literacy policy?
- (8) Was there a parallel between the development of ESOL/EFL policy and literacy in the 70s/80s?
- (9) Did one help facilitate the development of the other? If so, what was the relationship?
- (10) If so, in what ways?
- (11) How would you sum up the literacy policy in the 80s?
- (12) Do you think there were lingering effects of the involvement of volunteers and the media from the 70s?
- (13) If so, how did these manifest on literacy policy?
- (14) Any comments on the current direction of literacy policy?

Appendix E: Letter to members of the Moser Committee

Dear interviewee/

Adult Literacy Policy Research

This interview is designed to contribute to the data for a doctorate degree in Post-compulsory Education at The University of Greenwich. The focus is on the evolution of the *Adult Literacy policy*, with emphasis on the various discourses that may have played significant roles in its evolution. As a member of the working committee that initiated the most recent stage in this evolutionary process, it is important that your views and perceptions are taken into account, hence the request for this interview.

All prescribed relationships between the interviewer and interviewee, information and anonymity, as well as information provided and researcher's interpretation are guaranteed for this interview. In addition, the following research norms have been considered, and are in place in respect of this interview.

- With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed. However, whatever information is recorded in the course of this interview will be held in confidence, and any reference to such information will be anonymous except in cases where respondents specifically request that their names should be associated with particular views. Also, all recordings and transcript of the interview will be destroyed once the research has been completed and the degree awarded.
- It is recognised that whatever views you express are personal to you and not representative of the views of whatever organisation you are affiliated to or employed by.
- You have the right to withdraw at any stage in the course of this research.

- If any interpretations were given to information provided by you, they will be explicitly stated as the interviewer's interpretations and not those of the interviewee.
- Finally, I would appreciate a confirmation of your willingness to participate in this research using the enclosed consent form.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Gordon O. Ade-Ojo
Researcher
Dept of PLD
Maritime Campus
University of Greenwich
London SE 10 9LS

Prof Patrick Ainley
Supervisor
School of E&T
Maritime Campus
University of Greenwich
London SE 10 9LS

Appendix F: Interview schedule for members of the Moser

Committee

Your role/experience

I will like to start by asking you to talk briefly about your experience in previous roles, and to locate these in the context of your work with the committee. Has your experience and previous roles informed your vision of your role in the committee?

The mandate:

What was the government's mandate to you?

Were you given any indications of the reason (from the government's viewpoint) why the committee's work was necessary at the point in time?

Was there a controlling/monitoring agent put in place?

If yes, what is your view on this?

Did you have an agenda provided for you, or did you design your own agenda?

Composition of the working group

What is your view on the composition of the working group in terms of the following?

Professional background

Previous association with Literacy/basic skills

Did you have any concerns about the composition of the working group?

What was the relative role of individual members in terms of choosing/controlling the agenda of the working group?

Were you individually or as a group guided by any particular ideology?

Tools for measuring literacy

How did the committee arrive at the statistics leading to 'A Fresh Start'?

Are you totally confident that the tools for measuring literacy were reliable?

Do you think there are other ways in which literacy could have been measured?

Are the measurement tools, and therefore, their associated values aligned to any particular view of literacy?

Social factors.

Did you feel that there were particular social issues that the work of your committee was expected to address? If so, list.

Can you illustrate some of these factors in terms of how they affected:
Citizens
The structure of the society
Any other way

Were these issues identified by the group, or by the government?

What were the expectations of the group in terms of addressing these issues with your recommendations?

Were there any past events that played any kind of role in your decision making process?

Were there any other events/activities/initiatives going on in [the] society <at the time?> that you feel might have influenced the committee's perception/decision?

Are there other segments of the society that contributed to/informed some of the committee's recommendations? Is there a sense of needing to respond to the needs of some segments of the society? Eg, industry

Political factors

Was there a guiding philosophical value that informed your decisions?

What were these values?

Did these values, if any, generate a guiding ideology?

Did you feel that your mandate was related to any particular political ideology?

Did you identify this ideology yourself or was it part of your mandate?

Would you say that events unfolding /that have already happened in other countries had any effect on your/the government's decision?

If so, what events and in which countries?

Would you say globalisation had any impact?

General

Were there any other factors/issues/events that you feel played significant roles in the working of the committee and did they have any influence in the outcome?

Was there an overall consensus among members of the committee in terms of recommendations and in the perception of what is required?

If not, what differences that emerged from your own point of view?

Would you say that the recommendations reflect your view in all aspects?
Are there recommendations with which you are not in full agreement?

If so, which ones and why?

Reminder questions

Social

Ask about unemployment, benefits

Explore linkage to New Deal etc

Explore the role of the manufacturing sector.

Explore the fallout of the downsizing of the mining industry in terms of creating a flexible workforce.

Political

Ask about similar initiatives in America, Canada and Australia

Ask about Europe and comparative labour market

Explore the thesis of globalisation

Appendix G: letter to interviewees asking for validation of interview transcript.

Dear Sir/Madam

Research on Adult Literacy Policy.

You will recall that sometime last year, you granted me an interview towards my Doctorate degree on adult literacy policy and practice in the UK. The transcript of the interview is now ready and I am forwarding it to you to seek your confirmation of the content. I am sending an unedited copy, as I would like the transcript to reflect the essence of the interview as much as it possibly can.

I would be very grateful if you could confirm the accuracy of the transcript as a representation of the interview I had with you.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely

Gordon O. Ade-Ojo

Dept of PLD

School of Education and Training

University of Greenwich

30 Park Row

London SE10 9LS

Tel: 02083319349

Appendix H: Sample response to request for validation of interview transcript

Dear Gordon,

Thank you for the transcript of the Sept 06 interview I had with you. Congratulations on completing it, I know what a labour it can be, transcribing. You ask for confirmation on accuracy. It all looks fine to me with the following very minor corrections needed:

1. p.2, in the third R paragraph: the title of my first book was 1979 Working with words: literacy beyond school. In talking to you I'm sure I didn't give all the detail, but in the transcript, something like that would be more accurate, otherwise it looks as if the title was 'Interviewing students'
2. Suggest replace capital letters used throughout for the words: school, class and cities - with lower case.
3. p6, in the fifth R paragraph, the predecessor to Alan Wells was called Bill Devereux, need to amend spelling of his name there.
4. p7, para beginning 'But there are two or three things...', line 5: I am quoting an opinion here, rather than expressing my own, so could you open quotation marks before 'this is appalling' and close after 'reluctant people'; para beginning 'We came together', the acronym is RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy)*
5. on p9, in 2nd R paragraph, it's David Barton, not David Button; and in 5th R paragraph, the bird is spelt with a silent P - ie Ptarmigan

With kind regards

xxx

xxxxxxxxxxxx

*nb the RaPAL conference this year is in June, in Galway, Ireland - are you going? I'll forward details)

Appendix I: Sample transcript of interview

INTERVIEWEE: XXXXXXXX XXXX REC: DM00XX

R Does it need a battery or something?

I No, it's got a battery. And this is a recording of an interview with XXXXXXXX who was a member of the Working Committee that produced the document A Fresh Start. Okay. Right, really this is not a structured interview, and I am hoping that you might dictate the agenda from time to time, depending on what you feel. And I would like to start with your role, based on your experience. Now I mean I've used the two terms together, your role in the Working Committee of [Sir Moser] and Working Group, so to say and, your experience previously. So, in the light of that, I wonder if you would be happy to talk a little bit, just about your experience, your previous roles and how you see that in connection with your role in the Working Committee?

R Okay, well I started my – do you want me to hold that, or will it work okay?

I It will work, it should work okay, yes.

R Okay do you want to check, or you're happy?

I It's fine.

R Okay. I started my career in education as a part time Esol Teacher in Hackney. And in fact most of my work – most of my work in education has been in the East End of London. So – and I still have a very lively interest. I was absolutely passionate about English as a second language, and I still believe strongly that it's a human right to speak the language of the country that you live in. Now not everybody may want to assert their entitlement to that right, but it's a right. So I worked as an Esol Teacher and then I worked as an Esol Organiser. And then life went by and by some extraordinary, I don't know how it happened, but I ended up being a Principal of this College in Tower Hamlets, where there was this fantastic opportunity to have the freedom and the power to really do something substantial about Esol and literacy teaching. So that was always a great interest for me and, more than an interest, a passion. So that's I think my experience. Now – and that's why I was invited to be on the Committee because I was identified nationally, I think, in a small way, you know, very small with Esol teaching, that's what – that's people kind of thought, oh, she's a senior person with an Esol background, let's stick her on the Committee. Now so there I am as the, I think the only, well there was – I mean by the time I was on the Committee, I was no longer

anywhere near being a practitioner, I haven't taught Esol for years. My knowledge was superficial. But to my horror, I found that apart from one other person, I knew more about Esol and literacy teaching and learning than most of the people around that table. Now that sounds really arrogant and I really didn't, you know, I was horrified that there were no practitioners apart from one other person who came from Norfolk, which is not exactly known as kind of...

I An Esol area.

R Yeah, yeah. So, you know, I mean and, you know, I wasn't there as an expert and, to be honest, nobody ever treated me as an expert, I was there as an irritant, and people treated me as a nuisance, no question about it.

I I mean I was going to, you know, lead onto that, because I was going to ask, you know, this as a follow up question, did you see yourself there, you know, in your role as this person who, you know, had a lot of experience in East London literacy, or just a senior practitioner in her field, you know, bearing in mind that you were a Principal, you know, for a very big college, so to say. Now did you see yourself in that Committee or did you see yourself invited to the Committee on the basis of your role as a Principal or as this person with experience of teaching Esol?

R Well, okay, first of all I've got to say, you know, if somebody asks you to be on a Committee like that and, you know, I know you must think I have got a very sad life, but I thought this is heaven on a stick, you know. I thought, for me, I was so flattered, I was so pleased. It felt like the kind of pinnacle – at the outset this is, it felt like the best thing that could have ever happened to me, the greatest honour to be on this Committee that was going to make literacy and Esol a Government priority. My goodness, isn't this what I'd wanted all my working life. So it felt fantastic. But then when I – but I don't know why I was put there, because I didn't create the invitation. But, as soon as I saw the situation, what I realised that I had to do was to find a way in which practitioners had access to the Committee. So, because I didn't know anything, or didn't know enough myself, so what I did was, with others on the Committee or with particularly with the Secretariat of the Committee, I organised invitation sessions for practitioners to come and talk about the issues that were coming up on the Committee. Do you need a pen?

I [Inaudible]

R Go on, yeah. So that – and there were a couple of sessions like that where people came and had conversations about the topics that were being discussed, people who really did know what the business was all about. And I thought those were really useful. And of course the other truly – but, you know, they had those conversations, but whether you could say anybody took a blind bit of notice of them, is another matter.

Similarly, you know, it is tragic, I have now of course – I have now been on a lot of Committees, and I see this now all the time. The tragedy of people spending hours deliberating on the evidence that they submit only for it to be hardly read at all. Certainly the members of the [Mozer] Committee did not read the evidence that was submitted. I think the Secretariat probably did. I mean which is, you know, just outrageous. You think about all those Teachers and all those people all round the country, all those organisations, shall we put an and or a but, you know, do we really feel this, or do we feel that? And actually, you know, it's neither not there. Anyway that's on the other side of it, you know. So once on the Committee I saw myself as trying to find ways in which that voice of the practitioner could be heard.

I Thank you very much. Right, okay, I'm going to ask a few questions – how do I put this? Well I'm going to be asking about the mandated stuff, the mandate to the Committee, to the Working Committee. In a way is it possible for you to talk about what the Government's mandate really was, you know, I mean what exactly did it want the Committee to...

R I mean the thing I should have said to you on the phone is, that I've got a memory like an absolute sieve so, I'm just trying to think if I can remember what I thought it was. I'll just put very roughly, I think it was that the Government recognised it had a problem, and it has a problem. In my view it rather exaggerates the problem but, anyway, a lot of people are not fluent in the language our country and they're not confident with reading, writing and numeracy, and IT. So, given that situation, what needs to happen here? What is it that the country needs to do in order to resolve this problem? I think that was really what the Committee was asked to look at, kind of, yeah.

I Okay, alright. Now did you then have some kind of monitoring agent, like somebody who kind of cross checks what the Committee was doing?

R Oh yeah.

I Alright.

R Now there was a very – somebody who I really think would be very good to interview, because he was – he's a very good man, and somebody told me where he was working, and I'm afraid I've forgotten, but xxxx. xxxx was the representative from the Department for Education, the senior man. And it was his job to keep the Committee on track from a Government perspective, if that's what you mean?

I Yes.

R And then of course the whole thing was run by the Adult Basic Skills

Agency. So, Alan Wells and so on. But – and there was another woman – there was a woman. There was xxxx and a woman called, oh, xxxx somebody. She worked for xxxx, anyway I can't remember her name, I'm afraid. It's odd because somebody was just talking to me about her recently and saying that she has a job as working for the LSC as a Regional Director, I think. So you might find her from that list. I think her name is Felicity somebody. Anyway xxxx would be able to tell you where she is. And xxxxxx I think you could probably find by, well we might even just put in his name to Google. Certainly he was at the Department, so the Department should be able to help you.

I Okay, thank you. Right, did you have an agenda provided for you in terms of – when I say agenda, you know, a kind of, yeah, by the Government, this is what we need you to do and by when, and this idea you are to look at? Or, where you given the free hand to design an agenda for yourselves?

R My feeling was that it was – the topics that we were going to discuss were fairly prescribed, but they were also the obvious ones, you know, that, you know I wouldn't have quarrelled with, you know, whether it was talking about Teacher training, or qualifications, or resources, or materials, or the role of the media, all those kind of things were the topics we were to discuss. The framing of the agendas were with the Chair. I mean the Chair was very much in control, despite in the middle of the enquiry having a quadruple by-pass, he was nevertheless in charge, and in control, and holding the things from beginning to end.

I So, this might sound like, you know, a fairly personal question, but what did you think of the agenda itself, you know, personally?

R Well what – unfortunately the whole thing went off the rails pretty early on my view. In that I don't know how it happened to begin with, but anyway, in that we started to talk about the issue of qualifications for students. And it was absolutely my opinion that there was no need for a qualification for students, that was just a personal view. And some practitioners agreed with it and others didn't. And I never managed to make people understand that I didn't – because I didn't believe in a qualification, it didn't mean that I didn't think students shouldn't have certification, that they shouldn't have their progress monitored and be assessing themselves...

I And acknowledged.

R ...so all those things. But anyway, from a very early point, this issue of qualifications arose and the difference between myself and the Chair became very significant. So that of the twenty eight meetings that I attended, almost every single one we discussed the question of the qualification. It came very – it just came back again, and again, and

again and I personally felt I couldn't let it go. But – and the xxx couldn't either. And we just could not agree. So, this dogged – so all the other things that were discussed, for me anyway, were in the kind of shadow of this other discussion. Which, because we couldn't resolve the central issue of how do we value learning in this area? What is it about? Because for me, and it still remains the case, I mean I am desperate about what I see happening now. For me learning Esol could be about, you know, it could happen in a drama class, it could happen in all sorts of situations. The idea of trying to formalise it...

I Nearly to a master standard.

R Yes, I just, you know, I think in some ways it's been – it's terribly helpful to have the levels clear, to say – to be able to say, aha, you're at this point, you could get to that point, and these are the things that would involve learning, all of that's fantastic and we didn't have any of that, and we were just – at the time we just made it all up. So all of that development and curriculum development's terrific. But that I still find it hard to believe that these qualifications have any marketability or, you know, any currency in the world, other than telling people, once upon a time you couldn't read and write, or you couldn't.

I Thank you very much. Right now I'm going to ask a few questions about the composition of the working group itself. I know you, you know, you kind of mentioned a few things about it on your own. Right, what in your view, oh sorry, let me put it this way, what would you say your views are in terms of, you know, on the composition of the Working Committee itself? And I ask that in terms of the professional background of the people in there and their previous association with literacy, basic skills, Esol?

R And this is the most shocking thing. I mean there were, let me first of all say there were some really – there was a wonderful person who was there, and that's the guy called xxxx. Do you know him? And he is definitely someone, he is again, you know, along with xxxx, him and he's a very, very interesting man. And he contributed – he made the most serious contribution of anybody in terms of his knowledge and experience, which is about doing this. Do you know his work? He has done this longitudinal study showing – that shows the difference to people's lives that education of different kinds can have. But, anyway, he will tell you, if you go – he's – you know him? He's at xxx, wonderful guy. And his experience absolutely relevant. Xxxx also, one would think, relevant experience, he was not a good attender, it's got to be said, but knew something of what he was talking about. Then there's this – what was her name, Andrea somebody or another, from – who worked – she worked for the Basic Skills Agency.

I Was she there as a secretary...

R No, she was there as a member.

- I Oh, the lady who worked for some Council?
- R Yeah, Norfolk.
- I Norfolk or something.
- R Yeah, and then half way through the thing she switched jobs to work for the Basic Skills Agency. And she hardly contributed at all. Now, she should have been, you know, you'd have thought she would have a lot to say. And then, I can't remember who else was on it – oh yeah, there was a woman from the TUC, there was a woman from the TUC who was very nice, very good, I think she was having a baby though, I think that she went to or – she was very good. But now we're starting to move away, you know. xxx is an expert, xxxx should have been an expert, the woman from the TUC, no, xxxx, not really. And then we've got the woman from the Post Office, you know, God knows, you know, nice enough but, you know. And then we've got xxxxxxxxx, now a Lord, or Sir, or whatever. Now he and the Chair are old cronies. And xxxx, you know, you turn on the radio in the morning and you will hear him talking about economics in Russia, he is a world expert on economics, and in Russia and everywhere else. But, he knows absolutely nothing about this area, yet he felt perfectly confident to pronounce and decide and actually hold enormous sway, because of course he is a big man in the world. In terms of the power in the group, he was the most, apart from xxxxxx, xxxxxxxx was...
- I The next in line so to say.
- R Exactly. And so he was extremely influential with everybody. And I liked him very much, and he's a very clever guy, but I could not agree with a single thing that he had to say. And I don't suppose he's ever met anybody who speaks another – who doesn't speak English. Never, you know, just ludicrous, yet his opinion was so influential, absolutely outrageous.
- I So did you then get a sense that there might be a kind of imposition of, you know, for instance with xxxxxx, you know, an agenda from the field of economics, or from Labour economics, you know, which is the outstanding thing really because that's?
- R I feel as, and I think, you know, history's proved us right here on all sorts of things, whether we're talking about Academy Schools or whatever. But there is a kabala of people who are – who have a lot of power, who are very clever, who are very close to the senior part of the Government, who think they know better.
- I Everything.
- R Yeah. They're – and, you know, they are very clever and maybe we'll

all be proved wrong, and maybe they'll all be right, but I think it's unlikely. And it used to really make me laugh, xxxxx to start these meetings by saying, you know, hello everybody, and he'd then talk for half an hour, you know, or however long, he just, you know, he's the most dreadful discursive Chair, you know. And I'm a very – I'm temperamentally unsuited for this kind of activity. I'm not good at just sitting while listening...

I Listening to some...

R I go absolutely barmy, I can hardly sit on the chair, you know, it's very, you know, I can feel my internal organs shrivelling up as I, you know, sitting there. And he would say, at some point in his introductory half an hour, he'd say, and I saw the Minister for breakfast on Sunday and she wants a test, she wants a qualification, so we're not discussing this any more. And I would say, hang on a moment, you know, so we – have we got any independence from the Minister, is it not possible for us to say, and decide, determine what is right. You know, the Minister wants and, you know, you've just to go to, you know, I just kept banging on, but it was like banging my head against the wall. And so there was obviously no question that xxxxxx and xxxx, who was the Minister at the time, felt pretty sure what the outcomes of this piece of this report was going to be, from the very beginning, I've got no doubt about it and that xxxxxx was almost certainly involved in what...

I What the agenda, the outcome will be.

R Yeah, yeah.

I Okay, thank you very much, it is, you know, really you've kind of answered quite a few of the other questions that I was going to ask in that respect. Because I was going to talk, you know, ask you about what you saw as the relative role of individual members, you've kind of talked about that.

R I think, you know, they would turn to the woman from the Post Office and say, you know, don't you think when people come to get jobs in the Post Office, wouldn't it be a good idea if they came clutching this qualification? And I would say, but hang on, why should it be a good idea because, you know, what's it going to tell you other than that they couldn't do it in the past. And she would say, oh I think it's a really good idea, you know. Oh goodness, if only we had three of those, you know, and I would want to go and spit in her eye, you know. And because – but people are very attracted to power and so, you know, they just went along it. And, you know, to this day, to be honest, you know, I'm not sure whether – I wish I could have done a better job of it. I mean I think, you know, now I see how we have so much of it. I don't know whether it is actually – whether it happened in that Committee, or what happened subsequently. Because subsequently when they invented this term Skills for Life, and they appointed xxxxxx, and they

set up all this, you know, they couldn't – they didn't dare shut down xxxxx and so on. So they set up this parallel universe in the Department. They appointed somebody who had no background in it at all, but who was an absolute deliverer, you know, she would get it through. And they then created all this completely distorted and all the stuff that happened subsequently. You know, I don't – I don't think you could have seen the seeds of all of that in what happened in the Skills For Life. I think a lot of that actually happened subsequently when the whole thing just got a life of its own, that was completely absorbed.

I And all sorts of people were beginning to tap in, into...

R Yeah, yeah.

I Okay, thank you very much. Now at the beginning of this whole thing, there was this loud proclamation from the Moser Report, so to say, about the level of literacy and in quotes, illiteracy in the England. And, you know, I just want to find out your view about the tools, you know, the tools that were employed in terms of measuring what was considered and literacy, and the levels of literacy, and illiteracy. So I'd like to ask a few questions about that. One, how did the Committee arrive at the statistics leading to, you know, that – the whole thing, a Fresh Start, the, you know, that [inaudible] study...

R Yes I know exactly what you mean. You know I'm not really sure. And it was really – it was really only when it was all over. I don't think we argued about them much, which of course we should have, because they were barmy. But I think it was only – it was only afterwards, I don't remember us, I don't remember what – they must have come from the Department or from the Basic Skills Agency or a combination. Oh no, I know where they come from, that survey that they do every year, that's right. They came from that survey, that's right. And Alan Wells of course saw that as absolutely, you know, a hundred percent, gold carat, you know, to be trusted data. But I don't think we quarrelled about it much, I think it was – and you can't quarrel about everything, you know. But I think afterwards people felt – well, I know, afterwards people thought this is so exaggerated and it's so, you know. Seven million people illiterate, what we really mean is that there are seven million people who are not confident spellers, you know, or are not, you know, not...

I Wouldn't read the Shakespeare and Dickens in a particular way?

R Yeah, yeah.

I Okay, right, so in a way, you know, I don't want this to look like a leading question. So, would you then say that you really didn't have a lot of confidence in the tools that were used?

R Now I wouldn't say that, because the other thing is actually I wouldn't

care what numbers they chucked in. Personally I've always been in favour of making up statistics, you know. I've always found it terribly useful to say, seventy five percent of our students blah de blah, and wait for somebody to say, how do you know it's seventy five percent, if I want to make the case. And what we wanted to do, and my prime goal, was to make the case for Government to put in money. That was it, so actually I couldn't care a toss about...

I How the figures came about.

R That the figures really, you know, if – and in fact if they want to exaggerate the figures, at that point in the game, good, let's go for it. Because what we want to do is to get everybody scare to death really, so that they'll chuck in the money.

I Okay. Right, just one final question, and again, I can probably, you know in terms of the tools for [inaudible – 28.40] and literacy and again, maybe, I can say from what you said last, but I'll still ask the question anyway. Now, do you then feel, you know, maybe with the benefit of hindsight now, you know in retrospect that the tools were used and, therefore, the values that were associated with the outcome, is, you know, aligned to a particular way of seeing literacy or seeing, Esol...

R Yes, I see what you mean.

I Yes.

R Yes, probably. But, you know, it is this wonderful thing about hindsight isn't it, you know, then you know, if they're not – it's a fantastic science and all the rest of it, you know. There we were at that time trying to make a case to Government and, you know, it could have been done, I don't know so much about the tools. But, you know, if - we could have done it so much intelligently, there's no question about that. But, do you know, I really don't know, back to this thing, maybe you're going to move onto it, about, you know, how – whether it is the Moser Report and what happened in that Committee that is so influential? Or whether it is actually what then happened within Government that really has been significant? And, you know, I think it's what happens subsequently where, you know, which has just astounded, I think even those people who were...

I On the Government. Okay, thank you very much. Now I'm going to ask a few questions, you know, that I'm going to look at in the social environment in which this whole thing took place. And I'd like to start by asking if you felt at the time that there were particular social issues that the work of your Committee was kind of expected to address? You know, where there any social things, you know, any indications in terms of the society, in terms of the citizens, the structure and, you know, any other way of things that were going wrong within the society

from the view of the point of the Government and that you were expected to contribute towards?

R Okay, well I think only – I think obviously the biggest thing that – is kind of implicitly and sometimes explicitly sitting underneath all of this, is about the kind of economic wastage, the fact that people are not able to contribute as active citizens, both economically, socially and in every way. But the economics of it and the question of, you know, the kind of – both on the kind of - at one end of the spectrum, the wider benefits of learning, if people were able to feel more in control of their lives through – then they probably would spend less time in the Doctors and all that kind of thing at one of the end spectrum. And at the other they'd be able to get promoted work, they'd be able therefore earn more money, pay more taxes, buy more things, contribute to the, you know, the profitability of a country. I mean all of that is significant. And because we were talking all the time about adults, or generally about adults, you know, we weren't thinking about, you know, kind of the scum and report type issues, nobody was saying, you know, if we don't, they'll be on the streets, you know, breaking up the looms, kind of thing, that was not – wasn't – not so much about kind of social control, more about economics.

I Right, so in a way then we can take that one step further by looking at how much the Government itself expends on people who were, in quotes, literally, particularly if they didn't have any job?

R Yes, yeah.

I Yeah, okay. Now there are a few other things that I want to explore really and, you know, these are just straightforward plain questions. I mean I think in terms of flexibility of the workforce, and I look at the number of events that happened around that time, you know, in that decade, you know, the closure of the mines and all of that. And I'm beginning to ask myself if that can be a link in times of wanting people who used to be, for instance, miners and things like that, to be able to go on into another kind of job, if possible, if those jobs were available? Now was there any kind of indication, you know, in terms of, you know that theme of flexibility of the workforce?

R Yes, I mean, I think again it links to what I was just saying. I think those are – and, you know, there's nothing sinister about it, it's, you know, the world has changed, we're not digging out coal anymore, though maybe we should be. We're not – dockers aren't unloading containers, people are not manufacturing anything and, work – I think work unquestionably provides a structure for people's lives. And without it depression, dependence, you know, at just a human level, people – it is the main structure for our life isn't it. So, I don't see anything kind of sinister or Machiavellian in the belief that if people are better equipped educationally then they're going to have more control over their lives and they're going to be able to contribute a different

kind of workforce. Without a doubt the workforce – I think by the time the Committee, the workforce – that had already happened, you know, that the miners, and the dockers, and the change from a manufacturing to a service economy, had already gone a long way down the line. But of course what hadn't been predicted was that we would become dependent on Eastern Europe and a new range of immigrants would come, and so on. I mean that wasn't on the horizon at all. And that might have changed the conversation somewhat.

I Okay, now did you get a sense that there were other segments of the society that contributed towards the agenda, you know? I said segments of the society, maybe it's a wrong phrase to use, but I'm thinking in terms of say, for instance, the industry, the manufacturing industry, you know, the business....

R Okay, no the people – we did have some expert witnesses. So, for example the qualifications, XXX was running the – xxxxxx was running the qualifications curriculum QCA. I mean I don't think anybody could understand a word of his contribution, it was just gobbledygook, as far as I remember it. There was probably a thing from the Inspectorate, but I don't remember that. There was – contributions were made by people from the media, that was seen as important, because the media has played quite a role in literacy and teaching in the past. Those were the kind of main – and people were very much trying to find out from those kind of big experts. And then there was the evidence which – whether it got seen or not, and the seminars that I helped organise.

I Okay, thank you. Now then, political factors. Right, did you get a sense that there was some kind of philosophical value underpinning the work of the Committee?

R Well, yes, but it's quite hard to think how to characterise it. Because, of course, you know, we did all come from different places and I suppose it was caught somewhere between the kind of missionary zeal of do gooding on the one hand, and the kind of, you know, hard economics, let's get people, let's get Britain back to work on the other. You know, that...

I A kind of instrumental value?

R Yes, yes on the one hand and on the other hand also the feeling that some people's lives were blighted, as indeed they are, by unemployment or what have you.

I Or whatever it is, yes.

R Yeah. I mean I wouldn't question the good intentions of everybody actually, not for a moment. And the funny thing is, a few weeks ago I was invited to a Charitable Foundation to discuss a project they're thinking of running. And there were ten people who were invited to

lunch to discuss this project. And I found myself, for the first time for years, sitting opposite Claus Mozer. And it was a very good discussion and, in the lift afterwards he said to me, gosh Annette, that was a really shocking experience, we agreed! And, you know, for all that he drove me absolutely round the bend, you know, he is fundamentally a good man. He is an immigrant himself, he – his family escaped...

I Yes from Germany.

R ...Escaped the Nazis and, you know, and, you know, he and I, I'm a Jew as well, we should have so much in common. In fact, you know, we couldn't have argued more, or been more poles apart. But, you know, the intentions of everybody round that table were humanitarian, socialist in nature, you know, nobody was there trying to pretend that they were doing the kind of, you know, job for the Ford Motor Car Company or, you know, whatever, you know.

I Right, so – well this kind of, you know, undefined ideology, did you get any sense that it kind of influenced – because when I talked about philosophical value, I wasn't looking at it from the view point of just in the view points within the Working Committee, in terms of what was handed down, you know? You said for instance earlier on, you know, with xxxxx, who would say, oh the Minister wanted a [inaudible – 40.22] and things like that. So I was just wondering if that kind of undeclared value position, so to say, informed the overall outcome, you know...

R Oh yes, I don't think there can be any doubt about that, that what Government saw was this kind of very amateurish, undeveloped sector, a big problem that needed addressing, and that they could probably apply to it the same kind of target setting mechanics that had worked for them, they thought, in the Schools Sector, and that they could bring the same approach, very focused, very – well, just very, you know, whatever...

I From commerce through schools to a fee in a sense?

R Yeah, why not.

I Okay. Right, would you say that events happening in other countries, for instance, had any influence, maybe not in the Committee directly, but in terms of what the Government saw?

R Yeah, oh no, definitely, no definitely. We did – we had quite a lot discussion about what happened in other countries, and we received reports. And – sorry I'm getting muddled with another Committee I've been on subsequently, which is the Citizenship one, where we looked at what happening in Australia, and Canada and so on there. But I'm pretty sure we did look at what happened in Australia, but I'm not a hundred percent. This is a muddle, because after the Mozer

Committee I then went on to an even – an equally bad thing with xxxxx it was just awful.

I Oh, God, not that one.

R Yeah, it was terrible. But differently terrible. But I think it was – I think what was happening in other countries – other – ah, of course we did, I've remembered now, good. Probably the best session we had – is that your phone?

I It is but...

R You sure, okay. The best session was with a guy called Tom Strict – Sticht – do you know him? Tom Sticht. I think it's S T I C H T or S T R I C H T, Tom, his first name, he's American. He came over, he gave us – a presentation to the Committee, which was absolutely excellent, about what...

I EFF?

R What's that?

I Well that's something that they – I know they initiated, that they had in America about it, you know, it had just been launched before.

R What, yeah. He had done work for years in literacy in the States and looked at the, you know, he was very, very good. Yeah.

I Okay, right. Well since we're talking about political factors, I just thought I'd, you know, ask your view about this, I mean really. I look at the concept of globalisation and I see a link in terms of curricular development across many countries, particularly countries that share the same kind of value. And I just wondered if you sensed any kind of, you know, anything relating to globalisation?

R Well, do you know, I think I come at it from a different point of view. I don't think we, in the West, or probably anywhere. I don't think we really fully understand how adults learn. And I think we particularly don't know how adults with little – with low or no prior educational success learn. And I think we particularly don't know how adults with no or low prior educational success, whose lives are chaotic because they are poor, we don't know how those people learn. And I think that is a truly international problem. And I think every country is having to – struggles with it, and gives up all the time, just like we're giving up now. You know, we had a go, the Mozer Committee was the start of us having a go. And then it all falls into the too difficult bag because we simply – nowhere in the world do we understand the question – the answers to these very, very basic, cognitive questions. And they're so linked to social class, and poverty, and motivation and – so for example, a very simple, a very simple questions. How many hours do

you need to study to learn a language anywhere in the world? How – is it better for you to come intensely or can anybody learn coming four or six hours a week? Is that possible, ever? Almost certainly the answer is no, you know. But have we, and did we, and have we, and does anybody in the world face up to these questions? No, because they are just all too difficult. Because if we say to somebody you're not going to learn, it's great that you've come along and you want to learn, and we've got these resources here for you to learn. But we know from all the evidence we can see from here, there and everywhere, that if you just come on a Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, even if you come for twelve years, unless you are in an English speaking place at work...

I And at home or with your friends or something...

R ...or, you know, why don't you just forget it, you know. If you – what we could do is we could take you away to Wales for six months, at the end of that – just with English, other people and English – in an English speaking place, or to wherever, Wolverhampton, wherever we like to take people away, and we could do something for you then, almost certainly. But of course we can't talk to people like that, we can't deliver that, it's not possible. So, I think round the world and in this country we, you know, we do our very level best to struggle with how it is we can bring together the realities of what we know about learning, which is not enough, and the conditions of people's lives, which are pulling in different directions.

I Well, is that because we borrow templates from others? I mean templates in terms of how they have delivered it and failed, you know, if I can sort of say and, you know?

R Or is it because we're realists? I mean if – let's supposing we thought that actually a kind of, you know – well, I've always thought, if I was posted to Russia, to Moscow and I was going to live there, I didn't know how long I was to live there, but I didn't understand the script, I didn't understand a word, what would I do? Well, I would enrol myself, full time, in a – I'll get a job in a place where they only spoke Russian, and I would move into an area where they only spoke Russian, and I would study as many hours as I was allowed to. That would be the only way, and that's with all my – and then – but then, actually, if I was really myself and that, you know, if I think about myself, you know, a younger version of myself, I'd have children, I'd have my husband, I still would like to discuss books, and visit the cinema. So, there's no way I'd live like that is there? No, I would go and live with the ex-pat community and the gated community of wherever it was. And I would only ever speak English and I would, you know, maybe I'd learn to say, hello, goodbye and can I have a pound of sugar, which is about what the [49.03] community's up to and not much more.

I Well I mean, just – incidentally, there was a model of what you just

described in the '70s and the '80s that, you know, it was predominantly in Eastern Europe, you know, the old Czechoslovakia, Russia and all of that and in Eastern Germany. And what they did then was to relocate people from Africa and they took them into Universities having never spoken a word of – and I now quite a few of them who, today, are practising, you know, medical practitioners, engineers and all of that.

R And it still goes on. Actually if you ask somebody from Kenya, where are you going to? He wants to be a Doctor, where are you going to study? They're still going to Russia, because it's the cheapest medical, and a very good one, it's the cheapest place, and the same thing goes on, absolutely true. But, you know, that's for those people, and me, and you with our fantastic luck at having had some education, lots of it. But these other people they don't stand a chance in all the models that we've got that operate.

I Yeah, I mean, just, you know, I just look at the, maybe, the Esol practitioner and Literacy practitioner as just creeping up, you know, now. I mean I just wonder, you know, all the time, about why it is so difficult for people to progress to the next step? You know, regardless of their level of education when it comes to English?

R The only teaching I ever did, that I thought was any good, was when I worked for something called The Industrial Language Training Unit. I used to get up and I would be teaching at seven o'clock in the morning to – in hospitals and hotels. And we'd have the people coming in, they were domestics, Moroccans, Philipinos, and I would teach them the language of whatever they were doing at work.

I Contextualise it.

R Yes and then – so we'd have a class that would last an hour and a half say, and then it was my job to go, in the hospital, to go to the Ward and to talk to the Nurses about what it is I'd been teaching the – go round the different Wards where these cleaners were, and talk to the Nurses and say, this is what I taught Maria this morning, here's the handout. And we were taught to create handouts that were like cartoon strips with little bubbles, so they could really clearly at a glance the conversation that we hoped they would practice. Like it would be, you know, a future tense, you know, it could be, you know, what are you doing for the weekend? You know, whatever it is. And then I would go to the beds of some of the – I'd say to the Nurses can I talk to any of the patients? And they'd say, oh yeah, Mrs so and so would love to talk to you. And I'd go up to Mrs so and so and I'd say, do you know Maria your cleaner? Oh yes, would you mind, here's – this is what she did in class this morning, can you practice it with her? So that the person at work then, cleaning around, at least two or three people would do – reinforce the learning that she'd had. And those people made fantastic progress. You know it was just – and I've never, ever, in all the Esol teaching I did, I've never ever seen people actually move

in the way that those people did. Because it wasn't just a classroom activity, it was a living activity. Anyway, that's all a bit of side dish, but anyway.

I Thank you, thank you very much. Just another five, ten minutes if you don't mind?

R Yeah, sure okay.

I Are there any other factors, issues, events, anything that you think played a role and you want, you know, you just want to mention, any other thing at all? Either in terms of the working of the Committee, or in terms of the outcome, anything at all?

R I don't know. I know that I ended up very disappointed in myself, feeling that I had let a lot of people down that – not just about the qualifications. And, in a way – I mean, you know, what was my number one achievement there? I got Esol mentioned. I mean that – but, you know, not mentioned well, not, you know, all they would agree to was to say where we say literacy we mean Esol as well. You know, and, you know, that really wasn't good enough, it really wasn't. And so – actually it's been the experience of every Committee I've been on, I feel that I have, you know, I wasn't bad at running a College, but I've been hopeless on these things, absolutely hopeless.

I Okay, right. I was just going to lead onto that. I was going to ask you if you thought there was an overall consensus, you know, among members of the Committee in terms of recommendations, and in terms of perception of what is required, or what was required?

R On a lot of things, yes there was, there was agreement on Teacher training, on resources, on materials, on the role of the media, on, particularly what I was just talking about. I was really pleased that people were enthusiastic about workplace learning and how important that could be. So on all of that, on the qualifications we couldn't agree and that came – we nearly had a minority report, but I didn't think, you know, it wasn't – you know, if I had produced a minority report, it would have just been attention seeking, it wouldn't have made any difference. And it was better that the thing – you know, what I hoped was, and what I think I was persuaded wrongly, was that what would follow, when it got into the hands of the Civil Service, it would be implemented in an intelligent way. Now, I mean, I think it is, you know, if I was you and I was studying this, I think it is – what's of great interest is what then took place and, you know, how the Government or some – well it's not the Government, how the reductionist, you know, how in fact what happened, subsequently, was far more reductionist and mechanistic than anything that had been suggested in that report. You know, the way in which, you know, the Research Centre, the Teacher Training initiatives and all these things have been so focused around targets that have been...

I Been all mechanised.

R You know, yeah absolutely.

I Yes. Okay, thank you very, very much.

R Is that it? No, it's my pleasure. A pleasure.

I Thank you very much.

R Well good luck with it.

I Well that was the end of interview with xxxx, and thank you very much Annette. Okay.

R It's entirely my pleasure, I really do wish you luck.